No. 4047.510

THE TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON 1852 1878

LUX OMNIVM CIVIVM

VAGABOND DREAMS
COME TRUE

Photo by Hal Phyphe

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

VAGABOND DREAMS COME TRUE

by

RUDY VALLÉE

4047.510

PRIVILEGE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

New York
E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc

1150

VAGABOND DREAMS COME TRUE, COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC. :: ALL RIGHTS RESERVED :: PRINTED IN U. S. A.

FIRST EDITION

Mar. 5, 1930

PUBLIC LIBRARY
OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

TO MY MOTHER

AND THE MOTHERS OF
THE SEVEN BOYS WHO WORK WITH ME

Were it not for their faith in us, and their great love, we would never have succeeded

CONTENTS

		PAGE
Foreword		xi
CHAPTER		
I.	The Call of the Skyscrapers	15
II.	The Yankees Meet	27
III.	Two Things at Once	39
IV.	Pleasing the Majority	51
V.	Showmanship	62
VI.	Paging Mr. Barnum	72
VII.	Radio Brings Us Out	84
VIII.	Success—But Not Over Night	104
IX.	My Fan Mail	113
X.	Vaudeville	122
XI.	Late to Bed—Early to Rise	132
XII.	From Westbrook to Hollywood	142
XIII.	Did College Help Me?	156
XIV.	Jazz	162
XV.	The Sax God—Wiedoeft	165
XVI.	It's in the Wax	187

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVII.	Songs and Song Writing	198
XVIII.	The Song Plugger	219
XIX.	This Dream Girl Nonsense	227
XX.	"That's My Weakness Now"	232
XXI.	Originality	251
XXII.	The Irony of Fate	260

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Rudy Vallée . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

1917—Seaman, U. S. N. 78

The First Picture of the Connecticut Yankees at the Heigh-Ho Club . . 28

Broadway. At the Crossroads of the World 132

The Vallee Drug Store, Westbrook, Maine 144

From Main Street to Broadway . . 154

In the Yale Bowl—As Band Leader (Fall, 1926) 160

High School Days 196

FOREWORD

It seems to me that everyone has given his or her theory as to just why I and the seven other boys who work with me achieved such a sensational rise in what seemed to be such a short time. Since I am the pilot who guided the eight of us in our climb, I feel more qualified than any other person to speak; and, believing that I have, to some degree, the gift of analysis, I feel that my own theory is possibly more valuable to those who are really interested, than any of the other opinions that have been volunteered.

At this point, I want to make one thing very clear: I have myself written all that you will read here. I believe that I alone am capable of expressing myself on this particular subject. Although at this moment my schedule is one that keeps me on the jump from nine o'clock in the morning until four o'clock next morning—a nineteen-hour schedule that hardly permits of time to eat—I realize that this is my opportunity to really tell you something about our personalities, our early struggles and ambitions. I am beginning with zest and pleasure and only hope that you will find the result interesting.

Once more, let me repeat that this is my own sincere work.

HUSBAND'S LAMENT

FROM the day my wife Sally first heard Rudy Vallée,
  I'm here to announce that my troubles began;
We dress to his crooning, we eat to his spooning;
  I tell you there's no getting rid of the man.

We can't even sleep nights because of his "Deep Nights"
  That wing through the air from the Villa Vallée,
And "Vagabond Lover" I often discover,
  Is cheering my darling when I am away.

While I'm making money he radios "Honey,"
  "I wonder," says Sally, "Just whom does he mean?"
We are asked out to dine, and does she answer "Fine?"
  Oh no—"You forget, dear, tonight is Clopin."

You can't toss a hat any place in the flat,
  Without hitting Rudy in this pose or that,
I ask you what chance has a regular spouse,
  When some other guy lives all over the house?

When that didn't suit her, my wife turned commuter,
  And followed this baby out into the sticks,
I know from her blushing, she's been out to Flushing,
  The Bronx or to Brooklyn for him and his tricks.

If dinner is tardy, she's at the Lombardy,
  His megaphonetics intriguing her so.
Where Rudy is playing, that's where she is straying;
  I look in the papers to see and I know.

She bought a new dress for the Villa, I guess;
  We danced to his music and ate quite a bit,
And on leaving "Ten East" I was thinking, at least,
  Life must be worth while for a fellow with "It."

His records—we buy them, at all hours we try them;
  Of course I protest, and its always in vain.
She hates being bossed, though it isn't the cost
  But the upkeep of Vallée that drives me insane.

Now ever since Sally first saw Rudy Vallée,
  She's been rather loving; perhaps she is foxy.
There's nothing distressing about her caressing,
  But sometimes I think I am Rudy by proxy.

MARJORIE C. DIVEN

VAGABOND DREAMS COME TRUE

CHAPTER I

THE CALL OF THE SKYSCRAPERS

It seems that I have been "natural news" ever since I came into the spotlight. I have been called everything from a romantic sheik to a punk from Maine with a set of megaphones and a dripping voice. I have been supposed to have received orchids and bouquets during my theatre appearances. Furthermore I am supposed to have ignored these trophies, and to have caused all flapperdom to become stirred as it has never been stirred before. I have been called a menace (in a humorous way of course). And one article in particular gave me quite a kick when it referred to me as the Vallée peril, which made me feel like the general of an invading army. However I realize that this is really an absurdity, for my appearance in person should remove whatever worry any husband might have over me.

But even discounting humorous exaggeration, it is evident that many people are sincerely interested in me and in my Connecticut Yankees, and I think that our admirers might welcome an authentic account of our career.

The eight of us met on a Monday afternoon in January, 1928.

I had graduated from Yale in June, 1927, and had followed my graduation with a second summer tour in vaudeville with the Yale Collegians, not as leader but as one of the three saxophonists.

The fall of 1927 found me in Boston, Massachusetts leading a society orchestra with which I had once played in Maine. But Boston did not keep me busy enough, opportunity seemed limited and these two facts, combined with sentimental reasons, caused me to transfer to New York City. The only hope I had of work was the practical assurance of at least one job a week with the orchestras that Vincent Lopez was sending out to various banquets, large meetings and fraternity affairs.

I might explain something which, I find, is not understood at all by the average layman. The big orchestra leaders, such as Whiteman, Lopez, Bernie, Olsen and the rest, find that their own individual bands are the means of bringing a great deal more work than can be performed under their personal leadership. It is quite obvious that, when people desire to give an affair at which they require a dance orchestra, one of the above names usually comes to their minds; and after phoning the office they find, of course, that the personal outfit of Paul Whiteman is either on tour or at some place where they play nightly. They are told, however, that the office supplies replicas of the original band called units

and that these units may vary in size from three pieces to one hundred, at varying prices, depending upon whether there are star men in the outfit or just ordinary talent.

Thus springs up what is known as the Whiteman office, the Lopez office, the Bernie office, and this work to which they cater is called "outside" or "club" work. This work is sporadic, to be sure; that is, the work is seasonal, depending upon the seasons when debutantes come out, when marriages take place, when fraternal orders celebrate, when students are home for vacation, and when fraternities give their dances, during the football season. Thus, it is either feast or famine. However, most of the representative offices keep a certain number of men employed every week, and the advantage of club work is that sometimes three nights of hard club work pays more than seven nights of steady work. A club job is very hard while it lasts but it pays excellently, since the men usually play *steadily* from ten in the evening until the wee hours of the morning.

I came to New York in December, at a time when I knew someone would have to use me, since December and January are the busiest months for the here-and-there dance orchestras. I approached the two biggest offices that carry on club work, namely, Markels' and Meyer Davis'.

These two men had built up a tremendous amount of work and nearly all of society's debutante parties, young collegiate affairs at vacation times, and so forth, were handled by the orchestras that these two offices sent to play.

I have always tried to attack my objective in unusual ways and this, which was the beginning of my career, was no exception.

People hunting vaudeville work utilize their scrapbooks to the fullest extent. However meagre the clippings may be, they carry a great deal of weight with the producer. Therefore I brought mine to the orchestra leaders.

I had kept a scrapbook since the time I was in the Navy, in 1917. There were those clippings which related to my proficiency as a projector of motion pictures and as head usher in a large theatre (during which period I had studied the clarinet and dropped it, fooled around a bit with the trumpet, dropped that, and finally, more in a spirit of jest than anything else, had taken up the saxophone). Then I kept all the clippings of my development from an amateur to a professional. I highly prized those that showed me as an artist at various affairs, until I matriculated at the University of Maine, where my instrument brought me a campus popularity that made the year a very happy one in my memory; until the time I entered Yale, completely

unknown but with a tryout engagement with a New Haven orchestra on the evening of the day Yale opened.

The book then carried me through my first two years at Yale, with clippings showing increasing recognition; but at Yale it was all work and no play; I was doing as much as my health could possibly stand, with classes, or preparation for them, all day, and then playing almost every evening with a New Haven orchestra, led by two Yale graduates who pursued business lives in the city during the day, Messrs. Bolton and Cipriano.

I realized that I was missing most of the fun on the campus and the evening lectures that famous men came to New Haven to give. Just before I entered Yale I had been offered the opportunity to play in London at the Savoy Hotel at a very fine salary, but I had rejected it for Yale, feeling that my college diploma meant more to me than anything else. It was my mother's ambition to see me graduate from college.

However, I felt that I was not getting the most out of my college education, so it occurred to me that I would be wiser to take a year off from school and accept the London offer which I was still being urged to consider. I knew that if I saved I could come back with enough money to finish Yale without the extreme physical effort and expenditure of

time which my routine demanded. At that time it was nothing unusual for me to leave New Haven at two or three o'clock in the afternoon to go to some city like Worcester, Massachusetts, five hours away, either by automobile or train, where we would play at some country club or golf club until two or three A.M. and arrive back in New Haven at six or seven, just as my more fortunate classmates were waking up from a delightful sleep before jumping into their showers and going off to chapel.

There is nothing I enjoy more than a comfortable bed and a good sleep and sometimes I did envy them, although I loved my work and really never grumbled.

After conferring with the registrar and friends of mine in the University, I found them unanimous in advising me to take a year off and play abroad, so I sailed with two Boston boys on the beautiful *Olympic* in September, 1924.

Naturally my London clippings were profuse and very professional. I was with a band of Englishmen, while the two Americans who sailed with me were put in other small bands that the Savoy used elsewhere. We gave big concerts, and made records; I have our programs and pictures of us in all these undertakings. It was a very happy year for me and I loved England. Nevertheless I worked very hard

there, for besides my playing I taught two or three pupils a day, giving them from one and a half hours to two hours each. (By my return to America, I lost an opportunity of teaching H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, as he had decided to take up the saxophone and would have started in the fall when I re-entered Yale. I was teaching for the firm that had supplied the Prince's ukelele instructor and I would have received the royal diploma stating that I was, by royal appointment, to teach him the saxophone. But I felt that my college degree was worth more to me than a royal diploma, and I wanted to surprise those who had predicted that I would never re-enter Yale.)

The scrapbook carried me back to my return to school the following fall, showing my increasing musical prominence, up to my leadership of the Yale football band in the fall of 1926 and subsequent graduation in 1927.

With no more than this book, which was quite a work of art, the story being all typed out, and with the clippings in chronological order and emphatic points properly emphasized I even went the vaudeville aspirant one better. I had kept phonograph records which I had made in London and I bought a portable talking machine with which to play them. What an appearance I must have presented as I entered the various offices with the big

scrapbook, portable talking machine and folio of records!

Remarkable as it may seem, only one leader was impressed with all this array of talent, and that was Larry Siry, one of the great society orchestra leaders. He quickly engaged me for an affair at the end of that week.

Meanwhile the Lopez office had kept its word and I was one of twenty men at some affair nearly every week. My friend, George Wallace, who was office manager for Lopez, tried to interest Lopez in my book and records, but rather unsatisfactorily.

I was commuting from New Jersey to New York daily and getting rather tired of the trip. One night I felt inspired to write some of the big leaders. Every office has a booker who, while being subject to the wishes of the leader, exercises his own judgment in selecting men for its engagements and who, whenever possible, gives his friends preference. One booker in particular was very discourteous and noncommittal, refusing me completely.

At one of the biggest offices I secured a chance to play for its manager, and I suited him, but again the booker had too many saxophone friends of his own to employ, to give an outsider a break. However, I knew that another very successful orchestra director was doing quite a bit of outside work and felt that being very much the same type of man

personally, I might find fortune in his favor. But as it is quite unusual for dance musicians to write even to their mothers or sweethearts, let alone to orchestra leaders, I am told that this orchestra leader laughed and threw my letter in the waste basket.

I never heard from any of the other men to whom I had written.

In my letter to one office I went so far as to try to stress the fact that I would be of advantage to them on the engagements they played for Long Island society because I had graduated with so many sons of Long Island's élite that the boys would usually welcome me and ask their mothers to have that same band for future affairs.

The office to which I wrote stressing my acquaintanceship with the sons of Long Island society could never see this, apparently. But in the Summer of 1929 I had the great satisfaction of playing for Mrs. Payson at the Payson-Whitney Estate, Little Neck, Long Island, at which engagement there were many former Yale friends of mine, including John Whitney who was in the class of '26 and who at intermission insisted that the guests sit around in a circle while I sang, and then introduced me to everyone. We secured many other engagements through that one.

One leader for whom I have the greatest admiration is Eddie Davis, who has been catering to New

York society for years and who plays the violin beautifully. Eddie engaged me on the say-so of one of his saxophonists and liked me so well that I had just about agreed to throw in my lot with his office and stay with him, and had accepted many engagements, when I received the Heigh-Ho Club offer.

There was one office with which I had the most pleasant relations. That was the Bernie office. This office was carried on by one of Ben's brothers, Herman.

Herman is really a most charming and likeable character, but my first impression of him left me quite disconcerted, as he was bundling into his great-coat just as I entered his office, and in a most discouraging way told me, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but my bands are all intact!" I was very keenly disappointed. However, I left my scrapbook and the records with the girl, who was very civil to me, and went back a few days later, to receive much the same reply, but with Herman's promise that he would try to listen to the records. The third time I cornered him at his desk and I impressed him well enough so that I finally got a hearing. He took me over to a rehearsal room where one of the Bernie outfits was rehearsing and called to his brother Dave, who plays the piano. We played a few choruses of some popular tunes and I seemed to suit Herman because he told me to drop in the next day. He gave me nine engagements.

One of these engagements was in Baltimore and Herman went with us personally. On the Pullman, He and I became very friendly. The party was for a young girl whose brother had been in my class at Yale, and they made me feel very much at home; Herman was quite happy that I was in the band.

I look back on my contact with Herman Bernie as one of the most pleasant and refreshing experiences in my early days in New York. It gave me a great deal of pleasure, a year and a half later, to be able to substitute for Ben Bernie himself at an affair at the Commodore, when he was away in Pittsburgh; and Herman came personally to the Lombardy, where I was playing at teas, to ask me if I could do this good turn for Ben.

About this time the Heigh-Ho Club job was offered me and although I was very well set with several of the leading offices and had many engagements ahead, I accepted it. We were to try out on Monday night, January 9, and the Sunday night preceding the tryout I was one of twenty musicians recruited from the Ben Bernie and Whiteman offices to play at the annual Jewish Theatrical Guild dinner at the Commodore, tendered to William Morris, Senior, its president. I played on a tenor saxophone which I borrowed, as they did not need me on the alto saxophone, the instrument I usually played.

Some saxophone players will refuse an engagement rather than play a different size instrument

than the one they are accustomed to; especially do they refuse to play the tenor saxophone as it is not a solo instrument like the alto, but I enjoyed playing the tenor just as much, if not more.

I think the greatest thrill of my life came when just a year from that date I received a long telegram from William Morris, Senior, asking us to be one of the star vaudeville acts at the annual Jewish Theatrical Guild dinner which was being tendered Eddie Cantor, its first vice-president. The orchestra was composed of practically the same men with whom I had played the tenor saxophone the previous year. I will never forget the sensation that came over me as we climbed out onto the stage following the wonderful introduction, to receive a tremendous ovation, when only a year before I had sat among the twenty-piece orchestra and applauded with the rest of the audience for the acts that came out one after another.

The following Monday afternoon I met the boys who had been so hastily recruited for the Heigh-Ho Club job. We gathered in a small rehearsal room in Times Square. They eyed me somewhat disappointedly as I said to them:

"Let's get to work!"

CHAPTER II

THE YANKEES MEET

I WAS not a bit hurt when I saw the change of expression that came over the faces of the five boys who did not know me, because I realize only too well that I do not look like an orchestra leader. The other two, Cliff Burwell and the tenor saxophonist, Joe Miller, had played with me and knew that I had some ideas and liked my work. I had played many engagements with Cliff Burwell at the Westchester Biltmore during my college years. In fact, I regarded his pianistic ability so highly that had I been unable to secure him I would not have taken the Heigh-Ho engagement.

To me the piano is the heart and soul of the orchestra, without which you have nothing. And as I had for a long time had the ideas in my head which I was now about to put into practice, I knew I would need a pianist who knew his keys thoroughly, and had a good memory for old pieces; one could learn new pieces quickly, could play a tune in any key and, above all, could take piano choruses alone with only the drum accompanying him and play them in a way that would sound like four hands at the piano.

In all my dance orchestra experience I had played with the best of pianists. In London, our pianist was England's best. The American with whom I had sailed to London and who had been put with another band in London, was one of America's greatest. The men I played with while at Yale were the best. I had become quite spoiled, and since this was the first band of my own, I felt that to start with a poor pianist would be to whip me before I began.

I had wired Burwell, who was in New Haven, playing very little as work was at a standstill. He was a wonderful man who had never been sufficiently featured and brought out where the public could appreciate his marvelous artistry. Today I think he thanks me for doing just that. I was very greatly relieved when he wired back that he would come, and that he could also secure Joe Miller, the tenor saxophonist who lived near him and to whom I had also wired.

The rest of the men were strange to me.

There was Ray Toland, drummer, six and one half feet tall, size fifteen shoes. For several years he had played with Mannie Lowy, our first violinist, who has a wonderfully sweet tone and a loyal and energetic personality.

Next came Charlie Peterson, our banjoist, who came in from the middlewest with a Minnesota ac-

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

The first picture of the Connecticut Yankees at the Heigh-Ho Club

cent and the taste of several colleges; good-natured and always day-dreaming.

Then there was Harry Patent, our little bass player, quite as devoted to the study of music as my pianist. Harry had played the violin in junior symphonies and had decided to take up the string bass at the age of seventeen. He had practised long and faithfully but had failed to secure an engagement anywhere, because he looked too young; so he conceived the bright idea of growing a mustache, which did indeed lend him an air of sophistication. Someone had recommended him to us and we gave him his first opportunity. Today he is rated as one of the world's finest string bass players and has never failed to evoke admiration from other musicians.

Finally came one of the boys who is the bane of my existence and at the same time a great personality. With a name like Jules De Vorzon you would look for no less than one of the descendants of the old Canadian fur trappers who would have difficulty in eliminating a "Canuck accent"; instead you find a pop-eyed individual whose face is a puzzle. He might be Italian, or French, or even Jewish, which he really is. Jules—always late, always making engagements at the last minute; wrapped up in his girl whom he loves more than life itself—but little Jules, irrepressible, buoyant, with a *vitality*

that expresses itself in a thousand ways that always brings a smile and an invitation to the tables of our guests.

These were my recruits, and I say they looked at me in a disappointed sort of way because that is the first reaction of the average person who sees me for the first time. My appearance was never calculated to inspire awe or respect in anyone. It has given me a great humorous kick, when, in the course of our vaudeville engagements, we have gone to the stage door of a new theatre to find our dressing rooms and the stage door man has invariably said to me, "When will Mr. Vallée be here?"

I have long ago become resigned to this. And indeed it was some time before my boys came to realize that when I spoke to them they should give me attention because my words usually meant dollars and cents—the thing they were striving for. I have often wished for a personality that even in immobility would command complete silence and attention. But I suppose that that carries with it a certain hardness that might have destroyed some other part of me which, perhaps, is likeable. Those who know me, know that in spite of this day-dreaming attitude of mine, I can be very quick, and firm, and I have always been able in the end to secure discipline from those who work for me.

We had only a little while to do anything, but I

saw one thing that must be accomplished before we entered the Heigh-Ho Club.

Don Dickerman, whom we had yet to meet, had been trying various bands. He had opened the Heigh-Ho Club in a rush, to be ready for New Year's Eve. The floor was poor and he said his opening band was worse. A bad impression had been given those whom he wished to impress favorably. The food, as always in any Dickerman establishment, was superb and beyond reproach. Our manager had also had a previous opportunity for tryout, but his first band had failed. The appearance of the band had been against it and there had not been enough singing.

We had hired Jules De Vorzon as the vocalist. Although in my letters to the orchestra leaders I had said that I sang a bit, the kidding I had received at the hands of a Yale pianist with whom I had been in vaudeville, had made me feel, even though he had chosen me to sing lead in a trio on our tour of vaudeville during the summer, that I should stick to my saxophone. I was engaged primarily to lead our little orchestra at the Heigh-Ho Club and to play the saxophone.

Our manager had talked Dickerman into a second tryout. I took account of stock and I saw that, having only eight men, our instrumentation would not permit us to play the complete scores of the

tunes as they are usually orchestrated. We had no brass, that is, no trumpet or trombone. And these are absolutely essential in different spots in the course of any one of these orchestrations. But the fact that we began by playing only choruses, with an occasional verse, was not primarily born of necessity; rather did I realize that the chorus was the kernel and the heart of the tune in question and that all else, even the verse, was superfluous.

By that, I mean I had noticed that the average person listening to a band begins to hum or whistle the air only at the chorus. These are the people we are playing for, and I realized that if they become bewildered by a complicated modulation leading to a chorus, or a chorus harmonized so elaborately that its simplicity is lost, then the average person is unable to carry the melody along; the listener becomes bored with this orchestra, which he promptly characterizes as monotonous, and either turns away from it, or tunes off if he is listening to it on the radio.

I knew that the vogue for "hot" bands was really appreciated only by musicians and by a few individuals who were interested in "hot" band arrangements and who at places where these bands performed were of a nature to allow this music to work them into a frenzy of dancing. I knew also that to play "hot" music one must have brass. *Al-*

though I do enjoy this so-called "hot" music, when properly rendered, and get as great a kick as any musician out of Red Nichols, Frank Trambauer, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang and other masters of that style, I realized that it was over the heads of the vast majority of people who, after all, are those who buy the records and sheet music.

But there was one other vital point that most inexplicably seemed to have been lost sight of, or never thought of, by most of the orchestra leaders that I had played under; (and it had been my good fortune to have played under something like forty leaders since I had taken up the saxophone in 1920). This point I call "key color."

Every key has its own tone color which produces a certain definite effect, just as every actual color makes an impression upon us human beings. For instance, we all know that white gives the sensation of cleanliness and coolness; that is why hospital rooms and ice-boxes are so painted. Red suggests warmth and relaxation. Likewise each key has either a certain brilliance, or the very opposite effect of sombreness or gloom. The greatest offense of most orchestra leaders is their absolute failure to realize the value of contrast in key color. I have played under leaders who for half an hour have played *six* pieces *consecutively, all in the same key,* never realizing that they were not only boring themselves to

death but sapping the very life out of their listeners. Versatility and contrast have been two of the cardinal features of my work ever since I can remember; never to let people know what was coming next, to keep them guessing, has always been one of my ambitions. Therefore I realized there was nothing more beautiful than contrast of keys. This contrast is accomplished by following a piece in one flat by another piece in two; then change to another in three and so on, decreasing or increasing the signature in flats or sharps or by changing radically, say from four flats to two sharps (which method often gives a more beautiful and striking effect).

The majority of the listeners who now like our music are not really aware of the reason why our music first intrigued them. But it was just such contrast of tone color that made our music so agreeable. I had noticed that on society engagements, some orchestras had received a request for another tune, and not wishing to stop and get the music out, had attempted to go right into it, with the result that the transition was usually very discordant and distasteful to the ear. And yet this thing was a very common occurrence in the best orchestras at the best affairs. I realized that the only way this could be avoided was to make a perfect bridge between each song; each man must know where the change came and just what notes he should strike

when the change occurred. I know that all changes, regardless of the tune or the place where the change itself took place, were guided by certain rules, and that the men would only have to learn these rules and the different chords they would have to hold, to perfect the change.

So we spent that hour in perfecting that one thing. I know that most of the boys were rather skeptical and surprised; even though they were of a musical turn of mind, they thought me rather crazy. But today they are tremendously proud of the ease and clocklike precision with which we jump from one tune to another.

After that hour of rehearsal we went with our instruments to the Heigh-Ho Club, over in the aristocratic East Side section. I will never forget the breath-taking sensation we experienced on entering the Heigh-Ho Club. To describe it is impossible. I think it was the greatest thing that Don Dickerman ever did.

Simplicity, and yet great beauty. Gold as the predominating color. Everything so tasteful, so subdued. Dignified, and yet with a touch of Dickerman humor beneath it all. A tremendous landscape mural on one side, faced a mural of the bottom of the sea, decorated with the odd fish that Dickerman had drawn as staff artist with the Beebe expedition. In all this there was humor, which you might see

by glancing at the big centerpiece in the middle of the ceiling where, among the stately signs of the zodiac, you encountered one of the little half-man, half-animal figures thumbing his nose! That was Dickerman, always dignified with his tongue in his cheek!

The band platform, beautifully draped, was the best, acoustically, from which we have ever played.

Directly behind my drummer was a big live white cockatoo, from South America. He was not a speaking bird, but we had only to frighten him by a glance or unintentional movement, or even a loud voice, to cause him to raise his beautiful yellow crest while he watched for trouble. We loved that bird from the moment we saw him, but it was months before we were able to stroke him on the crest or under his beak.

Three lights played on us from different angles, one directly on me from the middle of the stand.

The evening found us ready to play at seven, and off we went.

As I have said, the stage was acoustically perfect and the opening number did my heart good. After a while Dickerman joined some of the guests and I asked our vocalist, Julie, to sing a song while we played.

I was called to the Dickerman table and told that Julie's voice was taboo. Julie had been a great enter-

tainer in vaudeville with some great acts, but Dickerman felt that his style was not quite suited to the Heigh-Ho Club, in which point I was forced to agree with him.

This was an embarrassing situation. The man we had hired to sing was barred from his task. There was a danger of losing the audition, just as our manager's other band had lost it, due to the lack of singing.

No one else felt like coming into the breach so, nothing loath, I picked up a megaphone which I had carried in the bell of my baritone saxophone (it was an old one which I had used several summers before at a beach in Maine where I played and occasionally sang a few songs). It happened that I knew the words of a couple of songs which I had taught Burwell, our pianist, in New Haven. I sang these, and one of them, called "Rain," later became one of our radio favorites.

Dickerman smiled broadly, which was his way of showing approbation. At the end of the evening he told me that he was satisfied; in fact, he was more than satisfied, he was enthusiastic about the band from both the appearance angle and the playing angle. The band and my singing had pleased him, and the job was ours. So we felt very happy.

The most surprised man in the band was my drummer who had heard me previously and who

thought it was sheer suicide to put me in charge of this delicate engagement. He himself had an excellent voice which also pleased Dickerman very much. Our two violinists, alone, were good men, and together they were unbeatable. Miller and I blended our sax tones, as we had played together before. On slow tunes we played two clarinets in the low register, which gives a most unearthly quality to the tone. (This swept Dickerman off his feet.) And with my perfect pianist, drummer, string bass and banjoist, all excellent men, we had a unit that I had every hope of developing into one of the best dance orchestras in the city.

CHAPTER III

TWO THINGS AT ONCE

TRULY my problem as saxophonist and director of the Connecticut Yankees is a difficult one, in fact I am really busier than the proverbial one-eyed dog in a sausage shop. This will be more apparent if I explain my predicament in detail and then show you the system that I evolved as my only salvation.

In the first place we have only eight men, including myself and there are only four of the instruments contributing a musical voice to the general ensemble, that is, the two violins and the two saxophones, of which I am one. The rest constitute what is known in orchestra parlance as the "back row." The "back row" is the rhythmic section consisting of piano, banjo, drums and string bass; these four contributing practically nothing but rhythm, except when the pianist "cues in" to help the melody out.

Though the four voices (as I term the two violins and the two saxophones) always play at the same time, I only permit two of them to carry melody simultaneously; usually the first violinist and I take the melody against the harmony supplied by the second violin and the tenor saxophone.

The last two boys may each play a separate counter melody simultaneously, but they must be sure their obbligatos (which they usually improvise themselves) do not conflict at any point. Then on the next chorus I shift to obbligato, the tenor saxophone shifts to melody while the first violin stays on the melody, the second violinist and I contributing the harmony, being careful likewise not to let our respective harmonies conflict.

Now, quite obviously, if any one of these four instruments ceases to play, even for a few measures, a valuable voice is missing and its absence is usually noted by even those patrons engrossed in eating, or in talking as they dance. The feeling that something is wrong is instantly in the air.

So I demand of the boys that they play at all times with no "lay outs" and no rest choruses for anyone. That goes for myself, too.

This might seem very hard, but it really isn't, when you consider that we play only for short periods and that six of us secure a rest about every third or fourth chorus when I turn my pianist loose for a chorus featuring the piano with the drums playing a soft rhythmic background. Even without this rest, it would not seem difficult to us because most of us have played many club jobs in our earlier days, where we did not drop the in-

struments or take them from our mouths *for hours at a time.*

The word "fullness" and "sustained tone" have been cardinal points in my direction of the boys. I abhor what I term "gaps," that is empty spaces between the phrases of a song where the whole band seems to have gone out for a haircut or shave. It was some time before I conveyed to the boys just what I expected of them, that is, a fullness of tone giving the impression of twice the number of men, which is secured by the proper blowing and bowing on the part of the four voices with the proper rhythmic background.

That we have succeeded in this endeavor is shown very clearly by the surprised remarks of many people who, upon seeing the band for the first time, have asked me where the rest of the men were. Most of them have been laboring under the impression that we had twice as many players.

This effect of continuous, sustained tone is a beautiful one and easily achieved. But the value and importance of each individual in a small unit giving his best (and that with hardly a pause for breathing) to secure a richness of volume, is seldom realized.

The problem that confronted me was this: I must direct the band, that is, tell the boys what

we were going to play and how we were going to play it, and yet play my sax.

I have told you that the style which we had adopted was to play only the choruses of each particular piece. To play more than three choruses of the same tune is to risk monotonous repetition and to bore our listeners. Therefore, after two or three choruses, we go right into another tune, being careful to choose one of contrasting type and key; that is, if the tune we were first playing was one of smooth sustained notation, such as all half-notes and whole notes, and of a dreamy nature, I would consider while we were playing it what would be a good tune to go into,—obviously something of the staccato type, with many rhythmic accents. A tune that would sound broken up, and what we term "peppy," would be an ideal contrast with the tune we were playing. The name of such a tune occurring to me, I must convey it and its key to the boys.

I had watched so many society orchestra leaders, who upon receiving a request for a certain tune, had attempted to go into it without telling the men the *key* of the piece! Now it so happens that sometimes a tune is orchestrated and published *in various keys for* various reasons. Bands on club jobs are composed of men who play under three or four different leaders a week and each leader plays these

certain pieces in keys that seem most suitable to him. Therefore, for one leader to assume that the men playing under him for the evening all are aware of the key in which he wishes the piece to be played, is to make a grave error. And too many times I have heard the horrible bedlam when the change was made, due to the fact that several of the men had their own ideas as to what key the piece would be played in.

And so when we approached the time for a change I would turn to my boys, give them *first, the key* in which the new piece was to be played, then the *name* of the piece itself. Thus our changes, after several nights of playing together, became perfectly smooth.

There was obviously one disadvantage which caused me to evolve what I term the "finger system."

Since I alone stopped playing to name this new tune and the key to the boys, the voice of my instrument was missed and only the other sax and the two violins could be heard. We tried naming all the tunes that I thought we could possibly play in a ten or fifteen minute period, before we began playing the set; but we found that bad memories and day-dreaming made this impossible because we sometimes played six tunes in the course of a fifteen minute period. Obviously, although I might name

the tunes over before we began playing that fifteen minute set, the boys whose memories were none too good were inclined to forget, not only the order of the tunes but the names of the tunes themselves, which resulted in trouble.

Again too, I might notice someone on the floor whose preference for a certain tune I knew. I might want to go into this tune immediately, and the naming of it would upset the entire order as I had given it out before we began playing.

I finally concluded there was no alternative but to name the new piece while we were playing the old one. Therefore I realized that something would have to be done so that the voice of my saxophone would not be missing when it was so badly needed. After all, the most important thing was that the boys should know the key.

We usually played our tunes in a certain order and in certain groups, especially the three or four hits from a musical comedy were always played in a set order. Therefore since the boys were able to guess what tune would follow the one we were playing, all they really needed was an indication of the key to confirm their suspicion.

The time taken in naming the key by word and turning my head right and left so that everyone on both ends knew what I wanted, took me away from my saxophone *for nearly half a chorus*. Then

again it was always difficult for the boys to tell just what I had said because the keys sound very much alike in name. You can readily see that it would be easy to confuse the words E flat with B flat when a band is playing. So I conceived the idea of indicating the keys by the fingers of my right hand, because, under the circumstances, the eye would be more accurate than the ear.

It is possible sometimes to play for several measures on the saxophone without using the right hand, while the left hand does the work alone. Taking advantage of that fact I indicated the flats by starting with the first finger for one flat, adding the next finger for two, the middle one for three and the little finger for four. By adding the thumb, or in other words extending all the fingers, I indicated a key of five flats, which is the maximum number of flats we have ever played in; in fact we very rarely go beyond four. Should we ever strike a key of more than five flats, which we have yet to do, I would verbally tell the boys the new key.

Now to indicate sharps with the same hand is very simple. I was greatly helped by the fact that hardly a piece of dance music is written in more than two sharps, so I began with the *little finger alone,* for one sharp; joining the finger next to it for two sharps, and adding the middle finger for three, which key we have yet to play in. Since the

first finger indicated that the key was going to be in flats . . . when that was not extended the boys knew that the other fingers were indicating sharps.

Musicians will probably wonder how I indicate the key of C, and minor keys. In the case of the key of C, I make a deaf and dumb alphabet C by slightly curving the thumb and first finger. I signal a minor key by first indicating the major key with the fingers as explained above and then stick up the thumb alone, which shows that it is to be the relative minor of the major key just indicated. All this is done in the twinkling of an eye and the boys have to watch me very closely.

Ofttimes I want to tell the boys to play another chorus of the same tune before they change to the new tune. Obviously it takes several seconds to say "Another chorus of the same tune." The simple syllable "ex" is one that is heard easily, and to us means "One more chorus of the same tune we are now playing." By crossing the first and second fingers I make the finger signal "ex" which the boys get very easily, and my drummer quickly speaks for me (I do not take my saxophone from my mouth). When I am singing or even playing the saxophone, the raising of my elbow till it is parallel with my shoulder indicates that we are to finish the chorus and stop entirely. When this signal is given, invariably the bass player, drummer and

pianist all three simultaneously speak the word "out" and watch to see that the boys sitting in front of them have heard, because nothing is worse than half the band stopping while the other half continues to play. In the matter of calling out my finger signals, they are all their brother's keepers.

This system has enabled us to make key changes with very few mistakes and the boys do not have to strain their ears or try to guess what I have said, but simply must pay plenty of attention to my right hand. They know that they are pretty safe in relaxing or day-dreaming on the first chorus of a new number; but toward the middle of the second chorus they must give me their thorough attention, in order to avoid trouble. After all, this is little enough to ask of them as they are sitting down with nothing to do but play their own instruments and watch me, while I do the thinking.

The finger system worked out perfectly, but it took some time before the boys watched me closely enough. At times I despaired of success.

The logical man to act as spokesman for me was my drummer, directly behind me in the middle of the band, high up on the platform, with a good strong voice, no part to read and, except for the beautiful women on the floor, nothing to divert his attention.

But my drummer is a great lover of the modern

"hot" music. In fact when he joined us at our first meeting he was laughing up his sleeve at my ideas for our style. Although he did not dislike sweet music, played as we played it, neither was he tremendously thrilled by it, and he firmly believed that for us to attempt to play as we did was sheer foolishness, and that we would certainly be a "flop." He delighted in getting absorbed in the "hot" rhythms which he played on the drums, and with his head over on one side, slightly nodding to the tempo of his rhythms, he was usually miles away from my little group, dreaming of "hot" dance music.

I had asked him to relay my signals to the entire band as he was completely free to watch me and carry this out. But the tragedy came when after flinging my right hand out with the key clearly indicated and waiting for him to relay the signal, I would find him wrapped up in "hot" rhythms and completely oblivious of the signal.

It took some stormy sessions before he and everyone else finally became alert and on their toes, watching me like hawks.

We have accomplished even more than I had hoped for at first. We have become so much like clockwork that the boys even get the keys without a signal, guessing just what tune I intend to play and thus reaching certainly the height of perfec-

tion. I imagine it must be quite amazing to anyone who does not understand how we work to see us jump from one tune to another, with nothing said and with no confusion whatsoever. But this perfection of co-operation has come only after many headaches and heartaches and much practice.

Perhaps my most difficult personal feat is directing the band while broadcasting.

I have often stepped up to the microphone to sing, and while in the midst of a song have had to figure out first, just how many more tunes we could cram in before the station announcement; second, who was to take the next chorus; then I had to give the directions behind my back with my hands to that individual, meanwhile I was thinking of melody and lyrics, trying to phrase the song with feeling, and lastly, to control the volume.

To top it off there have been those well-meaning but noisome people who persist in dancing by and either talking to me or asking questions while all the rest of this is on my mind. These people forget, or maybe are only too well aware of the fact that their loud conversation is being broadcast, perhaps to the four corners of the United States, and is no aid to our program!

I am happiest before the microphone and although all of this responsibility and effort might be a tremendous strain to some, I am more at ease dur-

ing an hour of broadcast than I am in making one master of a record.

Our deaf and dumb system is a great aid to us in broadcasting, especially in any of the impromptu affairs at which we sometimes play, because the boys have only to watch me for the routine.

Although I enjoy playing the saxophone so much that I would be unhappy not to be playing with the band, yet my load will be much lighter on the day when I can stand before a larger band with my hands and vocal organs free to do nothing else but secure from the band the best and most unusual effects.

CHAPTER IV

PLEASING THE MAJORITY

To BELIEVE in the myth of one hundred per cent satisfaction in entertainment is the quickest way to insanity. Nothing has ever turned out *perfectly* right, and in the field of dance music and stage work, to expect that it is possible to please everybody is a pipe dream. There will always be those extremists on either side of the great majority who can make life very tragic for the one who listens too closely to them.

I pay very little attention to those who with a sweeping gesture of dogmatic finality condemn our efforts as being terrible, or to the type that gushes always in a superlatives and makes everything "just gorgeous," "too wonderful," or "too perfect." Very rarely does anything merit these statements, for everything has some redeeming features as well as some bad ones.

Rather do I watch the vast majority, and when I see clearly indicated either by their applause or their silence, what they like or dislike, then do I change and not until then.

I have found from past experiment that my taste is pretty much average taste. By that I mean

I have heard tunes and have picked them as being prospective hits, and the subsequent success of my choices has shown me that what I like I may safely predict will be enjoyed by this majority. If I were to listen to every suggestion—and it seems that everyone is only too anxious to offer them, especially in the matter of what to wear and what to play—I would have committed suicide long before this. Bearing in mind the universal truth that after all pretty nearly everything is a matter of taste, individual taste at that, scattered individual opinions should not make one unhappy. They roll off me like water off a duck's back.

One management was the most conscientious I ever played for and placed such a close ear to earth, in the attempt to satisfy every patron who entered our supper club, that I was in perfect misery. It did not matter to them that in their attempt to secure the patronage of what they would term the aristocrat (although Heaven knows just what that species is!) they had antagonized a great many very fine people by making their establishment accessible only to the crowd they were catering to. But to those within our doors they certainly did attempt to give everything that their pennies had paid for.

They and I could never agree on certain various points, among them the length of the dance.

I go on the assumption that the crowd dancing

on the floor is composed of happy couples. It is pretty safe to assume that in a majority of cases the man and girl dancing together came to the club together (except for certain parties where there is a courteous exchange of partners, so that every woman has danced with every man). But even that custom is losing out to the custom called "cutting in," which has several advantages over any other form of interchange.

At the smartest country club and society affairs the cutting-in dance is the accepted mode. One of its disagreeable features is the fact that there are always plenty of those cheap stags who, rather than entertain a girl themselves, delight in coming and "cutting in" on every attractive woman they see, whether they have met her or not, thus having a good time at the expense of the other fellow.

Of course, at a more formal affair where the stags must be introduced before they cut in, it is not so bad. Although, if a dance couple is approached by a man, fairly sober and respectable in appearance, he is usually permitted to "cut in" by the couple that is dancing because each assumes that the other knows him. In any case, rather than cause a scene, the smart thing to do is to permit him to have his way. When young college men are home on vacation and are entertained by society, it is often announced that everyone may assume

that all introductions have been taken care of and that everyone is free to cut in.

But to get back to our supper club.

A long continuous dance is perfect where the majority is "cutting in." But even where there are no stags, but only evenly matched couples or parties of four or six people who exchange partners for one dance, I go under the assumption that the man is dancing with the girl he likes, and enjoys dancing with her, and that the feeling is reciprocal.

For that reason I assume, if I may judge from my own dancing experience, that the dance is a pleasure every minute, a fleeting moment of bliss that ends all too soon. The couples that do not enjoy dancing are, I believe, a negligible minority, and to sacrifice the length or type of dance for a small minority is to spoil the pleasure of those who are thoroughly enjoying themselves. There have been people selfish enough to ask me to prolong or shorten a dance just to please them, and depending on the time and place and physical condition of the band, I have tried to accede to their wishes. When, however, I am approached by a person who wishes to have the dance made shorter, due to the fact that he is not happy dancing with his present partner, I am very reluctant to acquiesce.

One manager tried to tell me that it is embarrassing for a man who is tired of dancing to suggest

sitting down to the woman he was dancing with, or vice versa. I took issue with him on this point because I believe that there is very little false modesty in these situations.

I have generally found that the woman is the first to suggest sitting down; it is her privilege because, after all, a woman's likes and dislikes are always to be considered first, and no man is going to be offended when a lady suggests, as she fans herself or breathes a little sigh of fatigue, that she would like to sit down. Neither should the woman feel hurt if the man remarks that he is tired, even though the dance may have just begun; although in the latter case, I really believe that the man should be somewhat of a martyr and continue, in spite of his fatigue, until he feels that she has had a reasonable share of dancing.

It has been suggested that a safe rule is to make the dances very short, with very short intermissions. But this rule cannot be followed too closely because often a man who takes a keen delight in dancing will have a partner who cares very little about it. She will seize the opportunity of the first intermission to get back to her seat, leaving the man quite vexed at the brevity of his dance with her. And so, while pleasing her, you antagonize him. And, after all, there is no reason why, at certain times, the woman should not also be somewhat

of a martyr and give the man some pleasure, even though it costs her an effort.

When the length of the dance is increased, and there are fewer intermissions, a man of this type will be well satisfied at the end, and although the woman may be a little tired she will have given her partner much pleasure and happiness.

Of course with the young folks, the dance for them is always too short; they could dance forever, and if the music is good, they are always reluctant to return to their seats.

A wise orchestra leader studies his crowd, and finding that it is either a young crowd or a middle-aged crowd dancing, watches the length of his dances and punctuates them accordingly.

When to end the affair, if it is a society dance, is always quite a problem to the host. If he is a wise host, he will leave it to the discretion of the orchestra leader, providing that the orchestra leader impresses him as having good judgment.

For every hour of dancing over the agreed hour of termination the orchestra receives a very high recompense, due to union regulations. That is when the orchestra leader makes his real profit, and so it is naturally to his advantage to have the affair go over the scheduled time. But it is a foolish orchestra leader indeed who counsels a longer dance when his wisdom and foresight for future parties

tells him that the party should end as per schedule.

This may require a little psychological explanation. Our fondest memories are of the things that were all too short and our greatest desire is for the unattainable. We never forget that which ends at its moment of greatest excitement or pleasure. And the dance that ends in the wee hours of the morning, with everyone happy and gay and wanting more, is the dance that is never forgotten; and the host or hostess of such a dance will always be credited with an affair that was a huge success. But the dance that is allowed to straggle on for a few unusually enthusiastic, and possibly "tight" individuals, until it dies a natural death, is the dance that is forgotten quickly. The dawn finds a few couples struggling along with tired and wan faces, and it requires a good hypocrite to say at the door, "Oh, Mrs. So-and-so, it was delightful!" or, "This is the best dance of the year!"

Of course, sometimes, an extra hour when it is really begged for by the majority, and especially when the majority is composed of young folks, may be absolutely essential to the success of the party. But it is a smart host, or hostess, who realizes that a party *which ends in white heat* will never be forgotten.

One of my most unhappy engagements was at a big country club where the manager, when sober,

insisted that I make the dances very short and cater to the elderly people, even though the younger folk outnumbered them four to one and due to the "cutting in," wanted long dances. This selfsame manager would get very tight, "cut in" on some young attractive girl, and then give me orders never to stop!

The head of the household engages his cooks as cooks and leaves them to take care of the kitchen. Except for specifying the delicacies that will delight his taste, he does not tell the cook how to prepare them. Probably if he did, the cook would leave. It is just as exasperating for the manager or president of a club or gathering to tell the orchestra how to play, and there is nothing worse than playing for meddlesome persons.

I delight in playing the pieces that people ask me to play, and I dislike accepting anything for so doing. After all we are there to entertain the guests and very often suggestions from the crowd save me a lot of worry and wonder as to what they might like to hear.

However, there is a type of person whose requests can spoil things for almost everyone else; that is the person who asks for his particular, favorite tune, not twice during the course of the evening, but five and sometimes six or seven times. When it is the daughter of the host, I don't mind,

especially if the party is being given in her honor. But the remarkable thing is that usually the young person for whom the party is being given does not come near me all evening! It is generally someone who probably came to the party without even an invitation who takes it upon himself, or herself, to tell the orchestra just what it shall play and how many times to play it!

Of course, the orchestra leader is very much akin to a clerk or even the manager of a department store, whose slogan is, "The customer is always right." It has been very difficult for me at times, to control my temper when an unreasonable person has done or said disagreeable and unreasonable things.

For instance, the slow type of dreamy music we play has come to be popular with many of the young folks, who have no trouble dancing to it, and is a fad even among the middle-aged. But the elderly type of person seems to have no success with this tempo. If they only knew that they could dance to it easily, by continuing to dance as they would to a regular fox trot, they would have no trouble. But because we are playing slowly, they believe they too must dance strictly in accord with the obvious tempo, and barely move. Watching the younger crowd should make them realize that some of the young folks are dancing even faster

to this type of music than to ordinary fox trot music.

It is not unusual for elderly people to come to me and very bitterly denounce the type of dance music we are playing, forgetting that when I play a waltz for them, I usually antagonize a lot of the younger folk. The latter, as a rule, do not care about waltzes and would rather just dance fox trots.

At the college fraternity dances at most of the smart Eastern colleges, the waltz is practically taboo, which is a tragic trend to me because I love waltzes, they are one of my best mediums of expression.

Then there are those who want only "hot" music; if everything is not jazzed up or pepped up, it's dull and boring. These are usually the young folks who have had a few drinks. And then, conversely, there are those who like the sweet, dreamy music.

Either extreme is boring and monotonous. The clever orchestra leader is he who makes his program up of a few sweet soft tunes, with occasional vocal choruses among the instrumental, followed by a wild peppy tune, played ever so softly, because *pep* is not *volume* and loud raucous notes have never delighted the ear of anyone.

I have played a certain note barbaric in quality

on my saxophone very softly, and have watched its effect upon a crowd, the livening up of young legs and feet.

I once knew of a dance hall where the clarinet was forbidden, due to the fact that it seemed to have a degenerating effect upon the dancing of a certain type of young person who went there, especially when it was played in Oriental fashion against tom-tom beats.

So I am firmly convinced that it is not the volume that makes for pep but rather the type of music and the style of the rendition, and I have come to believe that a happy medium in length of dance, selection of tunes, volume and tempo will lead to success as a dance orchestra director. All these things are decided by the director himself, and he is especially responsible for the tempo at which the band plays. One of Paul Whiteman's attributes is his marvelous tempo, which his men follow by watching very closely the movements of his knee.

I no longer worry about the loose odds and ends, and the extremists, who would give me gray hair if I listened to them.

You can't please everybody!

CHAPTER V

SHOWMANSHIP

THE TERM showmanship is generally used with reference to someone in the theatrical or musical world but it is evident in practically every walk of life. The drugstore clerk who juggles the drinks, pouring the liquid from one glass high up to another glass lower down, is really a showman. While he is trying to impress you with his cleverness he also makes the drink seem more attractive, or something that you are lucky to get if he juggles it right. Whenever someone tries, by exhibiting much physical activity, to attract attention and to captivate the admiration of others, this is showmanship; this is based on one positive fact: that the eye is about four times more efficient than the ear as a gateway to attention, memory and interest.

You have only to realize that the silent movie has been successful for many years, in fact has paid for the cathedrals that now show talking pictures, to understand the importance of satisfying the eye.

That is the reason so few people enjoy phonograph records; in fact it is really only orchestra and band musicians who are studying the parts and have only ear interest to be satisfied, that can sit

and listen with complete attention to phonograph records.

This is one of the reasons that the makers of radio programs have the devil's own time to keep the interest of their listeners: because there is no band or speaker to see, attention lags if the program becomes at all dull. Unquestionably television will add greatly to the attraction of the radio, because people must *see* that which is giving them something for the ear. That is why an attractive vocalist, either man or woman, with beauty of face or figure or eccentricity of pose and delivery will be twice as successful as a homely one with twice the vocal or speech-making ability.

Ted Lewis, to my mind, is the greatest showman in the theatrical game. He will tell you himself that from the standards of artistry he is not a great saxophonist or clarinetist, nor does he claim to have a beautiful voice. But he holds me and thousands of others actually spellbound by his inimitable wizardry of presentation. No one could sell his band, his numbers or himself in quite the same way as this magical fun-maker can. It is hard to say just what feature or features are most responsible for his success; perhaps it is his joviality, or the pathos of his voice, or the fact that he is always on the move, juggling his hat and cane, and injecting into his act little comedy bits and byplays with the

members of his orchestra. He has made a fortune and he can thank one thing, the fact that he was born with more sense of showmanship than a score of average men would have. I can think of dozens of others but none of them so well-known and quite so clearly a good example as the high-hatted tragedian of song.

Sometimes showmanship is used as a cloak to prevent the exposé of a great weakness. Many a trombonist, whose lips cannot produce the tone, makes up for the lack of what should be coming out of the end of the horn in actual music, by grandiose motions of his arm as he moves the slide, thereby earning the title among musicians of "Joe Motion," meaning that he is only good for motion to conceal the fact that he is really unable to play his instrument. Likewise many another instrumentalist has secured an engagement and become a big hit in the eyes of his public by elaborate, graceful or even awkward motions and contortions that so catch and impress the eye that his weak musical delivery is forgotten. You yourself can probably recall the obvious and concrete example of the beautiful girl with no voice who becomes a tremendous sensation, or at least very popular, in musical comedy, admittedly due to the silent showmanship of her beauty.

I suppose the same trick of delighting the eye is

responsible for the great popularity that eccentric dancing, of the type that one sees between the episodes of a musical comedy, is so popular. There is nothing that will bring great applause so completely as a dancer who knows some odd and hard steps. The eye seems to be so impressed with the unusual physical exertion that the hands feel they must applaud loudly.

Personally, although I have always been aware of what showmanship was and the value of it, I have never made and do not make even today much of an attempt to practice it. All my life I have believed in conservation of energy. In fact, near the end of my schooling I seriously thought of becoming an efficiency expert to eliminate waste motion. Nothing, of course, could be so diametrically opposed to showmanship as conservation of energy and motion, because the showman *capitalizes waste motion in order to impress his audience.*

Notice concert pianists who raise their hands sometimes a foot or two from the keyboard to impress you. Nothing could be more detrimental to their playing, because obviously the fingers should be as close to the keys as possible to secure the best results. Take the violinist who allows his hair to come down in front of his eyes, who twists and turns and bends his knees, or who stands with legs apart and makes a great physical effort to reach a

certain note. This is a very common type of showmanship.

When I first began playing I used as little effort as possible, keeping my fingers close to the keys, distorting the face as little as possible and keeping the horn close to the body.

Watch the showman saxophonist who takes his fingers two or three inches from the keys, throws his sax into the air as he blows, puffs his cheeks out, or who plays with one hand while the other hand is waved aloft.

I realized I was not a showman as I played my instrument. But I did not care to be. I was striving to master the instrument itself and I bent every effort toward doing so. I continued this attitude during all the first years of my playing, even when I graduated and began leading my own band. Then as I stood before the boys who are with me today and realized that for the first time I had my own band and must put it over, I knew that I was confronted with the showmanship problem. I could have led, as many other saxophone leaders do, with much hopping around, moving of the saxophone and bodily shimmies, but at the risk of failing completely, I continued to play in an attitude of simple dignity.

Heaven knows the saxophone is abused enough by critics and even players, and the public has been

led to believe long enough that it is a mongrel contraption with no place in our list of musical instruments. I am glad there are a few of us who have sought to dignify and beautify this gorgeous reed-voice of brass, and I can truthfully say that I have tried to do my share.

In defiance of all traditions of showmanship the quiet dignity of my band and myself has become, instead of a great failure, perhaps the reason that so many people enjoy our work and go home remarking about our appearance. I realized this might be so. I knew that nearly every band leader insisted on bodily movements on the part of all the boys, especially during so-called peppy tunes, and that our quiet attitude was a distinct reaction from all of these and could not fail to impress even the most pep-loving individual in our audience.

So although there are a few who write and implore me to show some personality (meaning to jump around and wave my arms) these letters are outnumbered by those who say that I am a relief from the jumping-jack orchestra conductor.

My megaphone and my closed eyes are believed by the wiseacres in the theatrical profession to be a part of my showmanship. But both were unpremeditated and very logical, as I will show.

My voice is not strong and is essentially adapted to the microphone where no effort is involved.

Therefore, in order that it receive some impetus in the theatre, I have found a megaphone to be absolutely essential, especially when we consider that the great cathedrals of today, seating three and sometimes four thousand people, were not built for the natural reception of a soft voice like mine.

One of the main disadvantages of the megaphone is that it detracts from the visual effect by hiding the face. The complaints I have heard on this score furnish another proof that the eye must see what is going on. This seems absurd when, after all, I am *singing*, and that singing is performed expressly for the *ear*. And yet the selfish eye must have its share of the entertainment and demands that it also have a share in everything that is going on. Instead of sitting back, relaxing and listening to the voice alone, which after all is the proper way to enjoy a vocal rendition, so many people feel very unhappy when they cannot see the face from which the sound is issuing.

I am looking forward to the day when I play musical comedy, as all musical comedy in New York is played in small theatres where the slightest whisper is audible to the back row.

I was happy while I was making my picture because the microphones were so arranged that I could sing normally and easily without a note being lost, and yet the selfish eye is not slighted during my part

of the picture, but may see all, at the same time the ear is satisfied.

Of course showmanship may be exemplified in other ways. The arrangement of a well-balanced program with every number calculated to please someone in the average mixed audience—this is just as much an act of showmanship as is the presentation of the numbers.

I doubt if my boys can ever realize just the responsibility that has rested on my shoulders in our numerous auditions and tryouts. When I knew that mine it was to make or break the band. They have never realized just how fast I had to think sometimes when we have had fifteen minutes to impress a group of over-bored individuals whose interest would be completely lost by an unwise choice of tunes. I am very happy that we have never failed in any of our auditions.

We are superstitious about our auditions, having begun the first two or three with a tune well calculated to arrest the attention of those listening. This tune is "My Time Is Your Time." Beginning it with clarinets in the low register brings a soothing sensation that is very agreeable and pleasant to hear.

Again in the presentation of our little comedy numbers, I have bowed to showmanship and have tried to present them in as genuine and spontane-

ous a way as possible. In fact, rather than present a comedy number artificially, forcing a smile from tired faces, I would omit it and just continue playing music.

Fortunately I have youth to work with, and it has been very rarely indeed that my boys have not felt like entering into the spirit of a number, for which I can be duly thankful.

I have neglected to mention a physical asset of showmanship which is worth a million dollars to the one who has it, and that is, *a genuine smile.* Many an individual with very little ability either vocally, instrumentally or otherwise, has had a smile which has been greatly responsible for the devotion of a large number of fans. Caricatures of the smiles of Harold Lloyd, Paul Ash, and numerous other persons will testify as to the wonderful drawing power of the smile.

You may object and say that this is personality, not showmanship. But showmanship is nothing more nor less than personality and each is bound up in the other; only that showmanship is possibly just a little-exaggerated personality.

People have often asked me to smile more frequently in my stage presentation work, but they forget that I am usually so tired, with only four or five hours sleep after twenty hours of steady mental and physical effort, that a smile would be unnatural

and forced; and I have always preferred to be my natural self when in the spotlight, even at the risk of being termed blasé or tired-looking.

Fortunately, as a general thing, a smile with me comes spontaneously and naturally, and even when most tired I find smiling an easy thing to do.

I think there is nothing worse than an artificial stretching of the lips over the teeth into a forced smile. It is laughable indeed to watch some of the acts as they take their bows on the stage. The minute they are in the wings and lost to the sight of the audience their faces assume their natural expressions, usually serious and tired, and (when the applause is not up to their expectations) very angry. And then you see an almost unbelievable lightning transformation as they set an artificial smile upon their faces, in the flash of a second, to return for another bow.

No, I may be odd, but I prefer to take my bows with a natural expression, regardless of what it is, because I believe in the maxim, "Be Yourself!"

CHAPTER VI

PAGING MR. BARNUM

CLOSELY identified with showmanship, in fact practically part of showmanship (and vice versa), is what the professional terms "hokum"; that is, something to amuse, to attract the eye and to tickle the sense of humor. Very few dance orchestras really use hokum at all, or at least to any extent, and most of those that do use it put it in either between dances or at intermission.

A few, however, were wise enough to realize that as the couple dance around there is very little to occupy their minds unless they are engaged in conversation. Usually I find that the fellow and girl do not converse as they dance; rather does the eye seek something to engage its attention. Of course one may watch the other couples, or those on the side-lines, or the orchestra.

I firmly believe that the dance orchestra will never be replaced by any form of mechanical music, regardless of how lifelike the mechanical orchestra may be; and the reason is not hard to find. The dancers want to watch the music being made and in turn enjoy being watched by the producers of the music. Put several couples in a room with a

large orthophonic phonograph and see how quickly they become tired of dancing. Unless it is absolutely impossible to secure a dance orchestra composed of human beings, a crowd will not be content to dance to mechanical forms of music.

That is where hokum comes in. The band that can put on little skits and comedy numbers with props and apparatus *while the crowd is dancing* has a tremendous edge on dance orchestras that simply produce beautiful, rhythmic music. Such an orchestra may rightly be termed an entertaining orchestra because they engage the eye while they entice the feet to dance and soothe the mind with music.

After the success of our first comedy number I saw that we had the ingredients for a "hokum" band as well as a "sweet" band, and proceeded to develop this side of our work.

My little violinist, De Vorzon, is a sort of buffoon. He has a personality that bubbles over and expresses itself in a dozen and one crazy antics and ideas, and as we play up to each other in our comedy numbers he reacts upon me and makes me quite a different individual for the moment.

Then my drummer, Toland, with his extreme size and happy-go-lucky personality, and Miller, my tenor sax, who has a mania for making almost as

many faces as Lon Chaney, have helped make many a comedy number extremely laughable.

The germ of the idea is often mine and the subsequent outline I usually develop, but it is the little extemporaneous bits that the boys themselves think of, that top off or complete the comedy sketches which we present even while the crowd is dancing.

Our first comedy number was a tune which I had been playing for several years. It was an old college tune which had only been played by two bands, our own and the orchestra directed by the boy who wrote the tune. Years before I heard it I had conceived the idea of exaggerated gestures with each word or line capable of illustration in pantomime in songs at dances.

The first tune which gave me this idea was a number from one of the early editions of the "Scandals" called "The Gold Diggers." In this number the word "dig" was illustrated by pantomime digging; the word "swim" by the movement of swimming; "Fifth Avenue" by five fingers of the hand held upright, etc.

Gestures done by one man alone are hardly noticed, but when done by the front line of the band in perfect unison they hold the audience quite spellbound, and it was nothing unusual for the crowd to stop dancing and gather around us during the course of such a chorus.

"Show Me The Way To Go Home" was the next number that suggested itself to me as good material. The business of being tired and wanting to go to bed could be illustrated by drooping the head and closing the eyes; "I had a little drink about an hour ago," by a mock quaffing of a cup or stein of beer and by looking at a watch; the line "Where ever I may roam," by shading the eyes with the hand and looking into the distance; "O'er land or sea or foam," by suggesting the waves of the ocean with one hand; "You'll always hear me singing this song," cupping the ear in an attitude of listening.

Both of these numbers, however, were just a little too moss-covered to be used by our Heigh-Ho Club band, so I dug up this old, but new, college song, "You'll Love Me Some Day, So Why Not Now?"

On the line, "Think what you're missing" we all assumed an attitude of thought. On "It's a shame" we made a gesture of embarrassment and mortification. We illustrated "You Miss the Kissing" by blowing a kiss into the air. "In open spaces" we illustrated by the Indian gesture of shading the eyes from the sun. "Where men are men" we illustrated by bending the arm in a way to show the muscle. "A chicken never waits till she's a hen" was illustrated by bringing the hand up, indicating growth, to different heights from the floor. On the word

"vow" we raised our right hands in an attitude of taking a vow.

However listless our crowd may be, when we begin a number like this the faces brighten and turn toward the bandstand to watch the gestures we make as we sing the tune. But it remained for one of the greatest public dance hall orchestra leaders in the country to give me the idea of using props. (We now carry with us two hundred odd dollars worth of props in order to put over some of our best comedy numbers.) This band, which tours the New England states playing public dance halls, puts on practically a whole vaudeville show during the course of their numbers. They carry a special entertainer who sings and does practically whatever comes into his very clever head as he stands in front of the band. Meanwhile the band utilizes its props, among which are two big stuffed dummies which almost look like life-sized flappers. Two of the boys dance with these and do a comedy number built around "Oh How We Love The College Girls!" They also have a great assortment of props, for a wonderful chorus on "Crazy Words, Crazy Tune," and many other numbers.

When I heard them go through some of their comedy numbers I realized the tremendous possibilities of such a thing, even in the most élite and fashionable night or supper clubs. Human nature

is the same the world over; we all enjoy entertainment for the eye, even of the crazy and meaningless sort.

I have always made acknowledgment to Mal Hallett for having given me the idea of purchasing and using expensive props to put over a simple number. I paid five dollars to have a large wooden key made to use in our "Outside" number. The ripple of laughter which goes over either our theatre or supper club audience when the key is first produced is worth many times its cost. We have expensive silk toppers and opera hats for various numbers; in fact I have a very clever artist who stands ready at all times to make up any sort of a hat, either in paper or cloth, when I might need it for some number.

Waring's Pennsylvanians stand out in my mind as the greatest stage entertaining band in the world. Their neat, faultless attire combined with their immaculate appearance and youth, the West-Point-like precision of everything they do in action, combined with the beauty, rhythm and tone of their music puts them on a plane all by themselves. Anyone who has ever seen their wonderful "Dancing Dominoes," or "Dancing Tambourine," or "Wobally Walk" numbers (especially the first two), will never forget the wonderful effects they secure with the lighted dominoes and lighted tambourines in

the dark. They are almost unbelievably excellent and their work is the result of a brilliant conception and patient practice. I believe that Fred Waring deserves every bit of the tremendous popularity he has achieved.

Much as I would have liked to produce entertainment of this sort in a supper club, I realized that I did not have enough men to really create such a wonderful picture, but I did develop fully the possibilities suggested to me by Mal Hallett and his band.

We carry five flash boxes, little metal boxes into which we put flash powder which is exploded by electric contact controlled by a switch far away. We use this for many comic effects—when the devil is coming up through the floor, or some fellow puts on a ridiculous hat, or, in the case of our Naval Medley, when one of the sailors spits out some supposedly bad liquor which is so strong that it ignites when it touches the floor. I believe our Naval Medley is one of the best things we do. It is done with everyone wearing sailors' hats, and we have a storm at sea, with lightning effects, the howl of the gale, a fog horn in the harbor, and of course, a comic passenger who answers the captain's command to go to the life boats by appearing wearing a bathrobe and holding a hot water bottle in his hand. In this Naval Medley we play many would-be naval songs

TON
BLIC
LIBRARY

1917—Seaman, U. S. N.

and some genuine naval chanteys that I learned while in the Navy, ending with the Naval Academy song, "Anchors A-Weigh."

In direct contrast to that, and to appease those who prefer the Army, we have our Army Medley in which we all wear steel helmets, and in place of the storm at sea we have an airplane attack. A blue light comes down from above and two of the boys search for the airplane while I imitate the noise of its motor on my saxophone, by sustaining a low note. We have pistol-shots, and our flash box explodes as would bombs when thrown to earth from an airplane. In this medley we play many of the songs that were popular during the war such as "Over There," "Madelon," "Pack Up Your Troubles," "Oh, How I Hate To Get Up In The Morning," "Oh, How I Miss You Dear Old Pal," "Long, Long Trail," "Tipperary," "Hinky, Dinky, Parley Voo," and "My Buddy." I end this by playing "Taps," with a muted saxophone, sounding like a bugle in the distance, while the lights of the entire club gradually die down leaving only one blue light from above striking my steel helmet.

This always leaves the entire audience very subdued and quiet for the next two or three seconds. Of course as we play these different songs, especially on the brightest of nights, the week-end nights, Friday and Saturday, nearly everyone either

hums, sings or whistles these tunes, which will never die in popular fancy. They are especially dear to the hearts of those who knew them during the dark days of 1914 to 1918.

We are particularly fortunate at the Villa Vallée in having a switchboard even larger and more elaborate than that of many of the best theatres. All in all, the Villa has something like two thousand lights on the stage and in the spacious part where the guests dance and dine. Our switchboard operator gives a different lighting effect for every number. A moonlight number and you have the feeling of a country lane in the moonlight. In the case of a warm passionate number, red is the predominating color, and so on.

Of course, our Army and Navy Medleys would not be half so striking if we were lacking in these wonderful lighting effects. But one of my greatest feelings of pleasure and happiness came at a country club where our lighting effects were very meagre, when Elsie Janis, who, of course, is so dear to all those who knew her overseas, stopped and applauded our airplane attack in the War Medley.

We have many other comedy skits; one in which I play the clarinet and alto saxophone, *together*, while in another, one of the violinists plays with his bow touching the four strings simultaneously. Then

we have numbers in which we wear cat hats, devil hats, Scotch hats, and Hawaiian costumes.

If we did all our medleys and comedy numbers together, I have estimated that we could give almost a non-stop two hour show. Some of the numbers we rarely do. One of them we still receive requests for, and that is Cole Porter's immortal "Let's Do It," in which I had five complete choruses to memorize, each one dealing with different nationalities, different insects, different birds, different forms of fish, and different animals. I know that anyone who has ever seen us do "Let's Do It" has never forgotten it; when I had the extreme pleasure of presenting it before Cole Porter himself, he promptly wrote out some new lyrics for me.

I have noticed that there are nights when to do our comedy numbers seems almost impossible, nights when the entire band seems a little out of sorts. However, I have found too, that it is absolutely essential that I be in the mood to do it, or the numbers invariably fall flat. There is very little doubt in my mind but that enthusiasm is very contagious and that when I am dispirited or unable to enter into the numbers with a zest the boys themselves find it difficult to be lively. I am fortunate in being blessed with good health and a super-abundance of vitality, and we have never let an evening

pass without doing at least two or three, or even more, comedy numbers, depending upon the requests (which sometimes are entirely for songs or sweet numbers).

I smile when I recall my career as a magician at the Heigh-Ho Club. There was a tune called "Persian Rug," which suggested the kind of thing a magician would have the orchestra play in a vaudeville theatre while he did his magic tricks. I gave the boys a great surprise one night when I produced handkerchiefs that changed color, and an egg that disappeared into a small red bag. I performed these things while they played "Persian Rug," and the crowd danced around to watch the tricks. I have often wished I had more time to learn many sleight-of-hand acts so that I might present them against that beautiful melody of "Persian Rug."

At the Villa Vallée it seems that those who come to see us want to hear the numbers they have heard on the air, and I can always tell when it is a radio fan asking for a number by the way he asks and the tune he asks for. As I do not want to disappoint anyone who has come to hear something that delighted them over the radio at home, I usually tabulate these requests so that I will be sure to play them before the people who asked for them leave.

Nothing makes me happier than to have guests ask for tunes which I know they must have heard on

the air. I know that the majority of our patrons are radio fans and some have come for miles and even hundreds of miles to see the band that was so pleasant when heard, and I know that they are pleasurably surprised when they find that this same band is just as entertaining to the *eye* as to the ear.

CHAPTER VII

RADIO BRINGS US OUT

I HAVE been confronted by difficult and delicate tasks in the course of my life, but this is perhaps the most unusual and difficult that I have yet faced. With the feeling that there is a need for one definite explanation from an authentic source as to just how eight young men could achieve, in these days of a bored and blasé show world, the sensational success that seems to have been ours, I am going to give my idea of it all.

As I said in my foreword, everyone seems to have felt the urge to offer an opinion, an explanation, as to our past, and present and even a prophecy as to our future.

Being one of those that they have theorized about, I feel that I should, even at the risk of destroying some of the romance about us, offer my own theory as to the reason for this so-called phenomenal success.

The reason that this task is so dangerous for me is simply that it is very risky for one who is still active in his artistic profession to attempt a sincere explanation as to the reason for his being a success.

Can you imagine just how difficult it would be

for, let us say, John Barrymore, to offer an explanation for his unquestioned success, by stating that he believes it is due to his profile, his six feet and several inches, the masculinity of his frame, his ability to make passionate love, the richness and romance in his voice combined with a charm, personality and acting ability that came to him as family traits?

It has been just as difficult for me to answer when various interviewers have asked me: "To what do you attribute your success?"

Of course I am not forgetting that our success is due in a great measure to the efforts of the seven boys who began with me and who are still with me. They have contributed greatly in the beauty of their tone and rhythm to the attractiveness of our programs and presentations. And we were later on extremely fortunate in having as my manager Edwin Scheuing, a young man whose coolness and level-headed business ability has secured for me all these present wonderful engagements at almost unheard of salaries. I am sure that no one could have "sold" us better than he. It is an undeniable fact, however, that a general is credited with the victory, and perhaps rightly so, in the case where the factors and strategies which were first born in his mind, and later carried out on the field by the men, brought the desired victory.

I consider Paul Whiteman the fore-runner and

creator of a style of dance music that has been rightly termed symphonized syncopation. His was the first mind to apply the principles of a symphony orchestra to his instrumentation and style of music; he was the first to split the chorus up into phrases, some of which were played by the saxes, suddenly followed by the brass for several more phrases and then by the strings. He was really the first to use several violins, several saxophones and a full team of brass.

The furore that his first records and early personal appearances made was richly deserved. The sign of his double chin has become the world over, symbolic of a certain type of dance music; his orchestra has become an institution just as famed as many of our symphony orchestras; and today, practically ten years from the time he first came to New York almost penniless, and completely unknown in the East, he is held in high esteem by the great public which speaks for itself. Nothing could endure the way Whiteman and his work have endured unless there were good, sound, sterling worth in it. My hat is off to him!

I believe I can honestly and rightly feel a personal pride and satisfaction in our success since I also, like Whiteman, had carried in my head for several years an idea for the presentation of dance music with song which first found expression

through my little group of eight men in January, 1928.

Therefore, I feel I am not egotistical when I confine most of this explanation for our sudden rise to myself and my ideas. And yet in the explanation I do not want to destroy any of that beautiful halo of romance that so many have built around us and our music.

Probably the proper time for a very cold-blooded, matter-of-fact, and absolutely precise analysis of the reasons and events back of the furore that we have created will be when we have completely retired from our present labors and activities.

* * * * *

The underlying factor for the tremendous appreciation that we seem to enjoy at present is what I would term psychological reaction to music or, in case the word psychological should frighten you from reading further—let us say simply the way music affects human beings.

To be wholly aware of a fact, to fully appreciate its value one should really have had some reaction to it himself. I first observed the effect of music upon myself, and then on others; and my observations in the case of other people, led to the type of music we now produce.

It is common knowledge that music which represents a story or compositions that are interesting

because of a connection with some incident in the author's life, may affect human beings in such a way as to make them sad or happy, as the case may be. But few of us realize that music in itself, even just the sheer melody of it, may through its key color and arrangement of notes, affect one in various ways.

Who is there that has not felt the thrill that chases up and down the spine, the urge to go out and conquer, a choking sensation of the throat, or throwing out of the chest, at the martial strains of "The Stars and Stripes Forever," played by a spirited band?

I well recall the wonderful thrill I felt, when I was in the Navy in 1917. After a week of scrubbing walls and clothing, coaling ship and performing the hundred and one tasks that seem so plentiful at a training station, what a reward it was when on Saturday mornings, clad in fresh clean uniforms, with our rifles on our shoulders, we marched behind a spirited band, across the green grass in the sunlight! The strains of those wonderful march tunes still linger in my memory; they were among the most inspiring things in my youth and more than recompensed for all the hated drudgery of naval routine.

Then, at quite the other extreme, is the somber and funereal music that motion picture orchestras

play when the news weekly shows the funeral of some great personage. These compositions were only selected for this type of picture because there was something in the vein and twist of the melody and in the harmony which produced the impression of sadness and tragedy.

In fact, by mentioning the different types of music that for years have been identified with certain types of things in pictures, I can best illustrate this reaction which is partly physical and partly psychological, to different types of music.

The spooky type of music that you find cued in for a burglary scene, or a scene of suspense, was first used only because there was something inherent in the music that suggested the nature of the thought. Then there is storm music which closely approximates a rising storm and denotes impending tragedy; music that by its accent and melody suggests a nationality . . . and many other types.

* * * * *

I had watched the effect of different types of dance music upon those who listened to orchestras. Dance music itself has to me been divided into two more or less clearly defined types: first, the type of music usually played with loud volume and in a manner calculated to make one feel the urge to beat time to it with the feet. This music usually has little melody and its essential characteristics are

rhythm, syncopation, accent and a tendency to create unrest, the desire to move the hands and body, and *to tap the feet*. This today is characterized as "hot" music and is that which, among both musicians and the public in the past, has been termed "jazz" and which has always had a great many followers and exponents.

Although I myself enjoy a finished rendering of this type of music yet I realized that its appeal is limited, both in the numbers of those who enjoy it and in the length of time they will appreciate it. One tires of this style of music very soon as one number sounds practically the same as the next. It finds its warmest admirers at society parties where nearly everyone has imbibed just enough to "feel good."

I realized that those who make a band successful by their appreciation are not musicians or those who frequent debutante parties, country club or yacht club celebrations, but rather the great masses of hard working people who come home at night from a hard day's toil and who seek comfort and rest in music of a sweet, smooth and quiet nature, either from records and radio or theatres.

When we first began playing I had no idea of the tremendous scope or power of radio, because the truthful fact is that up to the time I first went on

the air I had only listened in on one broadcast, and that was a prize fight. My broadcast experience in England had been limited to that of a saxophonist playing in a band. I did not direct or sing during our nightly broadcasts from the Savoy Hotel, but was one of a band composed of Englishmen and had no opportunity, *since I never saw the fan mail that our English band received,* to judge the power of radio or the type of numbers that a radio audience liked.

But my observation of the reactions of theatre audiences and dance audiences, combined with my own feelings, had shown me that simple melodies played in a simple way could hold the attention more firmly and for a longer period than any other form of music, even better than grand opera, symphonies, choral music and all types of novel band tunes.

I am more firm than ever in my belief today, since I have had so much opportunity to judge the correctness of my deductions from my fan mail, applause at both the Club and theatre, and the sales of sheet music and records.

Therefore I determined that should I ever have a band of my own, our music would be what is commonly called *commercial,* that is, music that would readily sell itself, that would easily reach the

heart, that anyone and everyone would like and understand.

I considered in detail the presentation of songs as they were commonly presented by dance bands, since the dance band was to be my medium of expression.

The average orchestration begins with an introduction, more or less pompous and symphonic, which is the effect of the symphonized syncopation of Paul Whiteman; then a verse which of course leads to the chorus; the chorus repeats itself and is followed by what is termed a *modulation,* which is a bridge or channel whereby the orchestra proceeds to change its key so that the chorus may be played, for the sake of contrast, in another key; and then by another modulation, usually a long-winded affair building up to the original chorus and thence to a coda, which is a formal symphonic way of saying "Good-bye."

I reflected on the effect of each part of an orchestration upon myself and I noticed that my attention was inclined to wander during the modulations and on the verse, unless the verses were exceptionally good. I did not, however, forget that my viewpoint was that of a *musician* and a *dance orchestra player* and that what might fascinate me might bore a layman. But I felt very safe in surmising that if a modulation failed to hold my atten-

tion when I, more than anyone else appreciated the intricacies involved in it and the beauty of it as a musical feat, then certainly it was practically worthless to those who did not understand its significance.

This, however, was not the only reason that I adopted our present routine of playing only choruses.

When we began at the Heigh-Ho Club we had orchestrations to play from, but, as I have said before, we needed brass, that is, two trumpets and a trombone and two more saxophones, to really do justice to these orchestrations. We were therefore obliged to play only choruses. Realizing that in presenting the chorus we were giving the best part of the piece, what might be termed the sweetmeat of the meal then, I felt that, as I have also previously said, I must avoid monotonous repetition by changing the sweetmeats every three minutes or so. So I adopted this style.

Now I have said that there are two different styles of music. One is the "hot" style which at its best is rhythmic and quite loud with little melody in evidence. The other method of presentation is to play *straight* or just "as is" with everything full, round, rich and clean.

It was only a short time before my boys saw my viewpoint. My pianist already had a wonderful

style, but I finally gave him to understand that I wanted every piano chorus that he took alone to sound like a pianola, or as though four hands were at the keyboard. I knew that this effect could be procured and that he could procure it better than anyone else. I myself held every note to its fullest value and played almost continuously, and I finally succeeded in securing from the melody instruments a style that I pictured as *a weaving in and out of melodies and obbligatos.*

The fact that I enjoyed our music and felt a great thrill of satisfaction at the end of our first week, made me believe that we had *something* in our happy combination that would delight the heart of anyone who cared for music.

Several weeks after our entrance into the Heigh-Ho Club we made our first broadcast.

I suppose it was perhaps a most fortunate thing for me that the Heigh-Ho Club could not afford an announcer and that station WABC was short of them. Mr. Sampson, one of the executives, and a most courteous gentleman, dined with me a little while before we went on the air and in a very quiet and efficient way gave me some good advice. He suggested that I make my announcements very simple, without wisecracks or facetiousness.

I did not know that it was a habit of broadcasting

orchestra leaders to acknowledge requests. Mr. Sampson left that policy to my discretion. Possibly my refusal to mention names, read letters and telegrams, acknowledge phone calls and requests has antagonized many people, but it has pleased infinitely more people and I hope has made our programs much more musical; because it is commonsense that to interrupt a musical program by reading a telegram or letter, stating that Mrs. Minnie Zilch has just phoned up to say her little baby of five years old enjoyed our rendition of "Georgie Porgie" and asks us to play it again, detracts from the musical value of the program.

Rather than be inconsistent I have adhered almost invariably to programs without acknowledgments.

Twice when I knew my Mother was very ill at our home up in Maine, I tried to cheer her and make her happy by telling her that I was to play her favorite composition, a beautiful Czecho-Slovakian waltz, called "Poëm." Other than that, and personal mentions I have been forced to make by the directors of some of our programs, I have avoided these things, which are interesting to only a very few people and quite boring to many.

While at Yale I had been a great admirer of Professor William Lyon Phelps. He has one of the

most remarkable styles of speech delivery I have ever listened to—smooth, easy, cultured, extremely entertaining and interesting, rich in anecdotes and humorous or even tragic allusions. He is considered one of the world's greatest after-dinner speakers and is remarkable for his ability to talk on any subject under the sun. His courses in Contemporary Drama, and Tennyson and Browning are the most popular courses in the university, and he is beloved by all.

My father, in his own small way, is somewhat like Phelps; he speaks French and English fluently with no betrayal of accent in either. During the War he delivered some beautiful four-minute speeches in both languages to the inhabitants of our little mill town in Maine. I believe I have inherited from him this gift.

Having observed Phelps very closely, I felt that in my radio announcements, little anecdotes and entertaining facts about each tune would be of human interest. This idea was the keynote of Professor Phelps' talks, and I felt it would be a good experiment.

The idea occurred to me that since we were at the Heigh-Ho Club, and the name was originally an old English greeting, a pleasant radio greeting would be, "Heigh-ho, Everybody!" So I adopted this and it has become synonymous with our music

and has always been an introduction. In fact one music publisher upon seeing the effect it had on our vaudeville audiences engaged a famous song writer to compose a song called "Heigh-ho, Everybody, Heigh-ho."

Considering that I had never heard Lopez, Bernie or any of the great orchestra leaders who announce their own programs, the fact that I avoided the pitfalls and pleased even the severest radio critics in my announcements, gives me great happiness.

We played our numbers in groups beginning our program with a "signature." Ben Bernie was one of the first to adopt this idea of a certain theme that should identify the orchestra. A person tuning in on a program of this sort would recognize the orchestra by this signature, even though there was no announcement, and it was a musical way of saying "Hello."

I also knew from my theatrical experience that there was nothing more effective than a voice against music. So, without asking WABC if it were possible, I took the chance and always announced against a musical background. The young man sent by WABC to the club to control the volume of our orchestra, soon saw what I was striving for, and regulated the volume of the orchestra so that when I stepped to the microphone to announce, the music did not overshadow my voice. I felt that

voices were of a musical quality even in speech and knew that nothing sounded nicer against an orchestra than a voice telling something interesting.

Our signature, which has become inseparably associated with us, is a Yale college football song, very famous, entitled "March, March On Down The Field." Several high schools and other organizations have for years adopted the melody for their own school songs, but originally it was the composition of a Yale graduate who wrote two other very famous Yale songs and whom I count today as one of my dearest friends. I chose this song because Dickerman had named us The Yale Collegians, and as a former leader of the Yale football band which had played this tune so many times in the bowl at New Haven, I felt it would be a fitting and spirited signature.

It is surprising the effect this composition has on our listeners. Many people say it is one of the most beautiful things we play and it has become even more beloved than before.

I evolved a routine as follows:

After playing one chorus with the boys, I step to the microphone and introduce us thusly: "Heigh-ho, everybody, this is Rudy Vallée, announcing and directing a program of dance music, which we begin with so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-

and-so." I used *announcing* and *directing* as I reflected that in reality I was doing both.

If there are any interesting details about any of the three or four first tunes, I mention them. We play them, with myself and various of the other boys singing an occasional chorus. Always this first group is in the regular fox trot tempo, which is fairly swift moving. Our second group usually consists of one or more tunes of a very slow tempo; these are compositions that must be played slowly in order that the beauty of the lyrics be not lost, because they are tunes whose melody and lyrics cannot be properly rendered in the regular fox trot time.

Thus we have contrasted tempos and of course, as I have said in another chapter, all our tunes are contrasted in their keys.

Our third group usually contains what I term a novelette, such as "Nola," "Japanese Sunset," "Song of India," in other words a purely instrumental tune that has no vocalizing and which by its nature is a contrast to the other popular types of tunes. This is the nearest we come to symphonized syncopation since we play this tune with introduction, modulations and all.

Then we continue with possibly one or more waltzes, possibly a tango, at least something of a

slow moving nature. Next we go back to a group of three or four of the outstanding hits of some successful musical comedy; then again to some slow tunes, which are more or less characteristic of our style.

This characteristic, very slow fox trot which we seem to have been one of the pioneers in playing, was simply the result of a necessity that I had the courage to realize and carry into effect. The average orchestra leader, fearing that his dancers will not know what to do against such a slow tempo, ruins these numbers by playing them in regular tempo. But I wanted to play them really well, which meant playing them slowly.

I was extremely gratified to read in the newspapers that at the annual meeting of the Dancing Masters of America in Pittsburgh the prize step which they adopted for the coming year was termed, "The Rudy Vallée". The particular feature of this step is, to quote the article, "a catchy bending of the knee which makes for grace and was inspired by the smooth, soft music peculiar to its namesake."

So our daring was not in vain after all.

I can understand the refusal of some orchestra leaders to play our very slow tempo because I know that I have antagonized some people by playing it, especially the middle-aged and elderly couples

who find it difficult to dance to anything but the regular fox trot and waltz. Young folks do practically the same steps to all dances and delight in inventing new ones when the tempo becomes difficult to follow.

I always planned our programs so that they had plenty of variation and contrast, with vocal choruses by myself and others in the band. When I first began with station WABC, I made all the announcements, including naming the station, the address of the Club, and our future program.

I can truthfully say that when I approached the microphone on my first night I had none of the fear or awe of it such as is supposed to terrify those who approach it for the first time. The reason for this, I suppose, was simply that I was not conscious of my audience and did not care what others might think of our work if I myself was satisfied, because I know that I am harder to please than the most cranky critics in my audience.

I believe it is only those who must have that personal animation, those appreciative of laughs, giggles, titters and murmurs that audiences supply, who find the complete silence of broadcasting and the dark metallic stare of a microphone screen uninspiring and nerve-wracking. I have never cared whether I was watched, or if anyone was listening to me or my voice; I play for the sheer love

of playing, and am scarcely aware of an audience, since I am wrapped up in the rendition of the composition itself.

For that reason I am happiest when in a broadcasting studio with no audience, with no voices, nothing but that jolly little mike staring at us. Neither do I visualize the thousands listening. Maybe once in a great while I am conscious that a certain tune will please those shut-ins and sick ones who tell me they like that type of music. But, to me, broadcasting is the spice of life.

As I mentioned before, there is no more difficult thing than broadcasting, yet even in meeting its complicated and nerve-wracking demands I am most happy.

Sometimes I jump to the microphone with my horn still in my mouth, removing it just in time to begin singing a vocal chorus, and even while rendering this chorus have to glance at my watch, and compute the number of choruses I can still play before the station announcement, which must come every fifteen minutes. At the same time to give directions with my hands to the expectant boys as to what the routine will be. But, strange as it may seem, the more complicated our program, the happier I am.

Toward the end of our program I usually leave a minute and a half to say, "Heigh-ho, until the

next time," while the boys play "Down The Field." The tune dies out just as the hour, or half-hour, comes to an end. To the boys it is a great relief and though I too, feel relieved when I know the broadcast has been well done, still I am very happy while it is taking place, because my heart and soul are in radio.

CHAPTER VIII

SUCCESS—BUT NOT OVER NIGHT

Our first broadcast from The Heigh-Ho in February, 1928, brought about twelve letters.

WABC was a small station, with radius confined to New York but it was a station of beautiful quality and power and has since become the key station of the gigantic Columbia Broadcasting System.

None of our write-ups has ever given credit where it belonged; even at the risk of injuring feelings I must pay due tribute and express my gratitude to stations WABC and WOR and WMCA which were responsible for the tremendous outburst we received February, 1929, at Keith's 81st Street Theatre in New York City. When we began at station WABC, our band was only a small speck on New York's horizon. But the enthusiasm which my surprised eyes read in those first letters affected me like magic. Still, the full realization of our powers did not dawn on me until about a month of broadcasting had elapsed.

Station WABC had a schedule that was far from full and they needed us to fill three or four gaps a week, sometimes for half an hour, sometimes an hour. At first we had a definite schedule, then it

would vary and at any moment during the evening we might expect a call from the studio to jump into the breach when some artist had failed to appear.

To make my programs more co-ordinated, like a well-oiled machine, I realized that each man must know exactly what was going to happen. Here, more than ever, we were handicapped because obviously the directions could not be spoken and since I was playing the saxophone I was not free to indicate the routine by pantomime. So I conceived the idea of giving each man a typewritten program of the numbers.

Since we were on the air as often as four or five times a week I realized too that every program must be different from the others, as much as possible, with repeats only when the number was very popular and frequently requested. I secured a hectograph, or duplicating machine, and a typewriter, and in my own home-made fashion, with two fingers, typed out the programs, staying in to do so while the boys went out to eat between dinner and supper sessions.

Sometimes I spent as much as *one hour* just deciding *which would be the best tunes to play,* typing out the program and duplicating seven or eight copies of it. But I found that my efforts were well rewarded by a much smoother program.

The boys often wondered why I was so exacting

and apparently unreasonable in my demands that every program be well-nigh perfect. If a mistake was unavoidable, I said nothing, but if the offender was day-dreaming, stupid, or heedless, the resulting error was brought to his attention immediately after the broadcast, and if it was really noticeable he would probably hear about it the rest of the evening.

But today I think the boys appreciate what my high ideals have brought us. *I read the fan mail;* they did not, although I invited them to do so.

I began to see what was happening.

One of my boys suggested that we were on the air too many times a week, but he did not see my theory which was this: I believed that by being on the air as often as four or five times a week, which is unusual in radio circles, eventually nearly every radio fan would stumble across us when moving the dials, and that our odd quality of tone and style would hold their attention, and that by having each program completely varied and different, carefully chosen and rendered, we would not become monotonous if one listened in every time we were on. Our terrific success has shown my conclusions to be completely justified. Our fan mail increased daily and my letters, which nearly all complimented us in superlative terms, bore witness to the fact

there was something in the nature of our music that was different and that *held the attention.*

The speck on the horizon had begun to loom larger.

I had brought back from England several odd tunes that no one else had. Among them was an unusual little song called "Georgie Porgie" that somehow seemed ideally suited to me, so much so that our fans called me "the Georgie Porgie boy" and letters poured in requesting it.

We created such a demand for this tune in New York that a big American publisher who held the American rights to it was forced to publish it here. But it never amounted to anything in the hands of other orchestra leaders, since it was a number that required a certain treatment, which they failed to give it.

This and several other tunes we alone played caused a great many people to tune in and tell others to do likewise, since these tunes were played by no other orchestra.

Thus we continued until Spring, 1928, building our reputation day by day, and receiving a tremendous increase in fan mail.

We had another outlet, of which I have spoken before, namely the Herbert Jewelry program over station WMCA, another small station which called

us from our beds at noon on Sundays to broadcast at two o'clock from the Hotel McAlpin. Although this was a small station, it was the only one that dared to broadcast dance music on Sunday afternoons.

We performed on three Sundays for three programs and then lost the account. Mr. Herbert felt the amount he was paying us was too great (although today we receive over twenty times that amount for half the time) and went back to the orchestra he had been using before he gave us our chance. My boys were dismayed, and after listening to the wonderful orchestra he was using, gave up hope entirely.

Feeling that *we had something that no other band possessed,* I pleaded with them to work very hard with me at the Heigh-Ho Club. I asked Mr. Herbert to tune in on the Club and hear us. And in about a month's time I was very pleased to receive a letter from him, saying he wanted our band and would pay our price. So we renewed our Sunday afternoon broadcasts.

As I recall the first Herbert program, I chuckle as I think of our novel and original idea for opening the hour. I intended to electrify our listeners-in and in this succeeded, perhaps too well. That first Sunday when Mr. Herbert tuned in on the new band he had engaged, he heard twelve strokes of a

clock, two shots and a police whistle. Then two of us impersonated a sergeant and an Irish cop; the idea was supposed to be an attempted burglary of the Herbert Jewelry store, with the sergeant boosting Mr. Herbert's collection of blue white diamonds and saying that they were so tempting he did not blame anyone for attempting to break in.

The police, however, felt that the thing was too realistic and called up Mr. Herbert, requesting him to have no more such mention of the attractiveness of his alluring diamonds.

Nevertheless we had achieved an unusual result!

As at the Heigh-Ho Club, each boy had a typed program. Again I was fortunate in being allowed to announce my own numbers. I asked for and secured this privilege, due to the complicated nature of our programs; to me, the musical sequence was destroyed by necessary pauses during which a cold and matter-of-fact advertising announcement was made *without music*. Both Mr. Herbert and WMCA, which operated, granted me this privilege and I became both announcer and musical director. Norman Pierce, the very famous and gifted announcer, was courteous enough to make way for my amateurish efforts, for which I can always thank him. I gained much from my observation of his and other announcers' methods when I had an opportunity to listen to them.

The Sunday afternoon program reached Philadelphia and also had a host of followers in New York territory; thus it was we were reaching two tremendous audiences.

Late Spring, 1928, found our fame grown noticeably, but it remained at this stage and grew no larger over the summer as we did not broadcast from the Casino at Rye, New York. It did not, however, grow smaller, as I found that our admirers were very, very loyal and sincere.

Perhaps the most touching tributes I have ever received in our radio work were the many letters that bade us goodbye and wished us well as we went in June to the Casino at Rye to play for the Summer.

In the fall, Mr. Dickerman decided to shift our broadcast from the Heigh-Ho Club to station WOR, which was one of America's great radio stations. I felt this was our great chance and more than ever did I insist upon the perfection of our programs. WOR had a tremendous area and was especially popular in New Jersey. We made new friends and my letters showed that all of our old ones were as loyal as ever. I was fortunate in having two or three odd, unusual and unpublished songs, such as "Deep Night," "The Vagabond Lover," and "Sweetheart of All My Dreams," that no one else played.

We renewed our broadcast for Herbert and were on the air sometimes as often as seven or eight times a week. By November the situation was quite acute.

We were making a cheap record which I mentioned in our broadcasts and the sales of which were tremendous, indicating that we had a large following. No one was more aware of this following than I, since the increasing fan mail told me the story. The remarkable part of it was that each individual was unaware of the fact that there were thousands of others who were also enthusiastic about our work. Rather was A absolutely unaware of the fact that B, who was probably his neighbor, was just as great a fan as he of this little group of eight men whose music appealed to him. Each felt that he was unique in his admiration. And this, to me, was quite humorous, though nevertheless, very pleasant to read.

I hope I have now shown that we were not an overnight sensation, but that our popularity was the result of a steady hammering through the microphone, comparable to the steady attack made by Grant at Richmond. And now our radio career has reached a new peak with our wonderful contract to play for the Fleischmann Yeast Company one hour a week for fifty-two weeks at several thousand dollars per hour.

What was over night and instantaneous was *the demonstration at the 81st Street Theatre,* where for

the first time each individual fan became actually aware of the fact that his neighbor was just as great a fan of ours. People who flocked into the lobby of the theatre believing they would probably be the only ones vitally interested, were surprised to find hundreds just like themselves.

Our subsequent vaudeville appearances only went to show that everywhere in the New York territory we had built up, through our radio programs, an army of admirers who were as loyal as the partisans of a baseball team!

CHAPTER IX

MY FAN MAIL

EXAGGERATION is, I suppose, the life and spirit of publicity. But being a very conscientious New England Yankee, born to state facts as they are, I have chafed under the ballyhoo of many a write-up. One point in particular is a sore spot to me: any mention, however finished or crude, of my fan mail irritates me. There is nothing quite so sacred or quite so wonderful as the tribute of an admirer to the one who receives it and to publicly make mention of this seems to me as brazen and as unpolished as to open another person's mail.

A periodical which carried my life story, "ghost written" by a girl writer, boasted that I received 20,000 letters a day. Nothing could be more absurd and untrue, and this would be very apparent to anyone who would stop to consider the improbability of such a thing.

This paper went on to state, in the little synopsis preceding the story itself each day, that many of these letters were proposals.

As I take stock of myself and try to imagine how others might consider me as being eligible as a husband, I personally fail to see why I should receive

many, if any proposals at all. But there is no accounting for taste, and I suppose that I might seriously appeal to some as a husband.

This is not mock modesty for remember I am well aware of the fact that my appeal is a personality expressed in a *voice,* and in the average marriage the physical side is of much greater importance than either the mental aspect or personality. People rarely propose to something they have not seen.

Had I been able to censor this "ghost written" story, which somehow got beyond my control, I would never have permitted any mention of letters or their contents as I feel very much like a Father Confessor who forgets immediately (as far as other people are concerned) what is told him, and every letter I receive, even those that criticize, condemn and deride me, I hold as most sacred, and worthy of my attention and thought.

I am very glad that I do not receive 20,000 letters or even 500 letters a day, because quite obviously I would never be able to read all of them, as I do now. Although I read fast it sometimes consumes three hours of my day only to read my daily mail, let alone the extra time it takes to answer it.

I am told by the motion picture studio people that my first picture, even if a failure, will bring me so much fan mail that I will not be able to read

it personally. And I suppose if all the Fleischmann letters were turned over to me, I would not be able to read all of my radio fan mail. This is even more unfortunate, as the radio letters I receive help me immeasurably in building my radio program.

However, those I may engage to read the letters, should the number of them ever get away from me, will be individuals who know my likes and dislikes and will understand how to give me a consensus of opinion of the daily batch of letters, as I feel it is most essential and important that I keep a very close and sensitive finger upon the pulse of those who are interested in my efforts.

My very first fan letters, which came as a result of our first broadcasts in February, 1928, were a revelation and an inspiration to me. My association with the radio had been very meagre indeed and I did not know and had never considered that people took the pains to express their appreciation of a radio program by letter.

To most people letter-writing is a most disagreeable and unwelcome task; there seems to be something irksome and difficult about securing writing materials, and sitting down and expressing certain thoughts on paper. This is readily understandable when one considers the steps involved in writing a letter.

First, it is necessary to be in the mood to write. It is obviously quite impossible to write a letter when one is exhausted or irritated.

Then again writing material, that is, envelopes and sheets, are never around when one wants them.

How many people possess pens that write freely and easily, in a way that makes one want to write with them?

Then too, it is surprising how many people do not know the correct form of letter-writing. But it is really absurd to be deterred from writing by this, because, after all, the form is only convention and for a person to fail to express his or her thoughts by letter to someone who is eagerly awaiting these thoughts, however crudely expressed on paper, is to fail to give happiness where it is so easily given.

Fifth, the address of the person to whom the letter is to be sent is usually vague and most of us are too lazy or possibly stupid to do a little detective work to locate it.

Sixth, a letter needs a stamp before it can be mailed and stamps are even more difficult to find than paper.

And lastly, there is many a slip between the sealing of the envelope and the mailing of the letter.

For the above reasons, when anyone takes the extreme trouble and time to write to me, I am flattered and honored, because I know that for most of

them it was, as they tell me in their letters, a considerable effort.

I find that radio letters fall into several distinct classifications.

First, there are letters that might almost be termed form letters, letters that in brief state how the writers enjoyed our music and that they are constant listeners to our programs. Then there are the letters that specifically state what tunes the writers liked in the past and what tunes they would like to hear in the future. Thirdly, the personal type of letter that asks for a photograph, tells you that the author likes the program, and names the tunes he or she enjoys and will enjoy.

Letters that contain more than this become, as I term them, unusual. And then there may be "*more* unusual" and "*very* unusual" letters with other qualifications calling for such terms as thrilling, daring, obnoxious, cruel, pitiful, ludicrous and sensuous.

The letters from which I derive the most happiness and satisfaction are those that tell me that from our music comes comfort, solace and enjoyment. There are those who tell me they come home at night from work, tired and dispirited; they say that when they are able to sit and listen to our little program their blues seem to disappear and they forget all their worries and cares.

How can I help but be happy in making and playing programs that I know are going to bring something of relief to those in such circumstances?

Then there are letters that come once in a while from some poor unfortunate invalid whose face has been turned to the ceiling for days and even weeks and months, and who has little or no hope of a change in the future. When these people tell me that the hours pass all too slowly until we come over the air to them, or when a nurse tells me that we do a patient more good than the doctor or his medicines, I feel happier than a philanthropist.

There is a little blind colony just outside of New York City whose members have taken the trouble not only to write but to come to my dressing-room at the place where I was playing, to meet me and tell me with their own lips just what our efforts have meant to them.

With such wonderful letters as these in my possession I do not feel so unhappy when an occasional uncomplimentary letter greets my eyes. I have long since adopted the principle, "You can't please everybody," and realizing that there are those who prefer a different type of music than ours, those who have their own ideas of voice announcing and style of orchestral music, I am not alarmed or piqued when uncomplimentary ones come to me. But letters of a very disagreeable type, especially those that con-

demn wholesale everything we do and play are very rare.

I must correct one impression that publicity has wrongly created, that is, that all of my letters are from girls, especially flappers. I will admit that the majority of our letters are from the opposite sex, but I receive more letters from mothers and young or middle aged women than I do from flappers. Then again I receive a great many from little children and plenty from business men, young men and old grizzled men, men who labor hard with their hands and who tell me that they get a great enjoyment out of our music.

Naturally, the messages come written on all sorts of stationery; but the cheapest kind receives just as much attention as the most expensive.

There are those who seem to regard me as someone to confide in—they tell me their troubles, their hopes and aspirations—and those who ask my advice about matters of great importance to them.

Where a letter merits a reply I send one, and when it is clear to me that a letter will make someone happier or assist in his or her recovery from illness, I write with pleasure.

There are young girls who write that they have made bets with each other that I am "high hat," that I won't reply, that I won't even read the letter; and even though sometimes I feel this is merely

a scheme to secure a reply, I take great delight in writing back in long hand, to destroy that incorrect impression that someone else seems to have of me.

One half the people who write to me seem to think that an apology is necessary as they begin a letter; possibly they feel that I will think less of them for writing. Or, feeling very self-conscious about it, they begin by saying, "I am not in the habit of writing this kind of a letter," or "I have never written a fan letter before." When these are sincere, I feel very flattered that I should be the first to receive a letter from them.

There are those who write asking for a reply, or condemn me, or dare me to write them and yet very stupidly omit their addresses. Obviously I am helpless, although I should probably enjoy writing to them.

I recall a most pitiful letter that I received from a tot of five years who told me that both father and mother were dead, killed in an accident which had left her unable to walk. She loved to hear me sing as her daddy himself had sung to her, in the same way that I sang. She had asked me to broadcast and to mention her name on a Monday night, but childlike had omitted to give me her address. So I was unable to write and tell her we were not on the air Monday nights, or to tell her to tune in on a night when I could play what she requested and,

breaking a rule I had adhered to very firmly before —mention her name. If she thought about it at all I suppose she wondered why nothing ever happened; but I was unable to do anything, since I did not know where to write her.

While at school I received on an average of two letters a day. One of my life ambitions then was to receive so much mail that I would hardly be able to read it.

Heavens knows, my wish has been more than granted! Sometimes it seems as though my eyes and brain are so tired that I cannot go on reading. But since those who have written me have individually given me their attention and consideration, I at least can give mine; and I hope the day never comes when I will be unable to give every letter my personal attention.

CHAPTER X

VAUDEVILLE

As I REVIEWED in my mind all the letters that had come to me, common sense told me we had to *show ourselves,* since nearly every letter expressed a curiosity as to what I could be like. My odd name, which might be either French, Spanish or Italian, and my speech, which was very typical of the people up in Maine, left them wondering whether I was fish or fowl, while an occasional rendition of "*Me Queres*" in Spanish added to their confusion. And then again I realized that many of the little novelties we had worked up showing the various personalities of the band, would make good vaudeville material. So when a friend of mine, Sammy Smith, sought to bring the booking agent of the Palace Theatre to the Heigh-Ho Club to hear us, I looked forward to the audition with the greatest of hopes. Many times everything was set; then something would take the booker away at the last moment, and it seemed as though he would never be able to listen to us.

While this was still in the air I read in the monthly magazine of my fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, that Lawrence Schwab, the first half of

that great musical comedy producing team, Schwab and Mandel, was a fraternity brother of mine, that he had struggled for recognition as a boy and now was perhaps America's foremost producer of intimate musical comedies, and that in "Good News," that latest Schwab and Mandel effort, they had used George Olsen. Olsen, however, was in Ziegfeld's "Whoopee" and would not be available should they desire his services in the near future, so I approached Mr. Schwab, hoping to convince him that we might be useful in one of his future musical comedies. I told him that I did not wish to presume on our being fraternity brothers, but I did feel that we had *something different* to offer which, spotted in one of his musical comedies, might prove of value to him.

I brought my big scrap book but he smilingly told me that he had no time to glance through it. I then asked him if he had a radio and he again smiled and replied that of course he had. I left him my radio schedules and asked him to tune in some evening since I felt that even over the air he might be impressed. I invited him to the Heigh-Ho Club some night after the show for I felt that we could sell ourselves to him. But we never heard from him.

He is a very busy man which accounts, I suppose, for his failure to hear us or see us. I suppose

everything happens for the best because had he liked our work and seen our possibilities, he probably could have signed us up for a relatively small salary, because although I had an idea that we were popular, I had no conception of our drawing power in a theatre, which power was amply demonstrated during the weeks of vaudeville and Paramount work following our opening at the 81st Street Theatre. A friend of ours named Charles Bayha, believing that we had great theatrical possibilities, took me to the owner of a theatrical publication who in turn arranged an audition before Earl Carroll at the Heigh-Ho Club. I was ill at the time, and could not show the band off to the best advantage.

The Keith booker came eventually to the Heigh-Ho Club for dinner with several Keith managers from the Middle West, and although he himself was impressed it was really the enthusiasm of the other men that convinced him that we should be given a try-out for vaudeville work. The Keith publicity department began playing up our radio publicity and the stage technicians operated in every way to give us a beautiful set. It was decided that instead of opening cold at the Palace we should have our première at the 81st Street Theatre, at 81st Street and Broadway. This was a small neighborhood house in a very nice, respectable neighbor-

hood where it was felt that our popularity was well established.

One theatrical paper described our opening as "an explosion in the theatrical world," and I guess it was, because we broke all records there both for attendance and for cordiality of reception, and we were held over from the end of one week to the first of the next week which had never been done before in the history of the house. Theatrical critics did not know what to make of it. We appeared against a black and silver stage setting, wearing morning suits, just eight men down close to the footlights. On the opening strains of "Down the Field" the house went mad, and after our opening number, as I stepped forward to say "Heigh-Ho, Everybody," my greeting was received with deafening applause, and at the beginning of every number there was a tremendous outburst of handclapping. I was astounded by the power of radio!

We were a little shaky for the first show but by the second show we were in full command of ourselves, and the warmth and appreciation of the audiences did our hearts good. The head of the Keith office sought a contract for further Keith vaudeville, but I could not say anything definite as I did not know just how long we could stand two and three shows a day with a night club every

night from 7:30 until 3 A.M. However, I tentatively accepted ten weeks at a figure that then seemed tremendous but today seems very insignificant. We were promised the goal of all vaudevillians, the Palace, in our second week, so after the first half of the week at the 81st Street Theatre was completed, we moved to the Coliseum uptown at Washington Heights.

The audiences at the Coliseum were the most enthusiastic we have ever met and it seemed as though the house must come down under the terrific rain of applause that greeted the mention of our name and our appearance. If we ever "stopped the show" it was there. We remained there just long enough to give the manager gray hair by almost failing to appear at the time scheduled, due to our night club work. However, the Coliseum stands out in our memories as the scene of the greatest ovation we have ever received at any time or place, and I have often wished that we could have gone back there for a longer engagement.

Then came the Palace! We met on Sunday noon in the little, old-fashioned but clean dressing-rooms of the Palace. To the layman, the Palace means little or nothing, but to the dyed-in-the-wool vaudevillian it is the crowning achievement of all his vaudeville dreams, the acme, the goal, the fulfillment of all hope and the climax of his career! There are those

who have toured "the sticks" in vaudeville for years before playing the Palace; and those who have died with spirits broken by their failure to appear at the Palace, and I suppose many a layman has wondered as I did just what the vaudeville actors mean by that phrase which they say with such a burst of pride, "Why I played the Palace!"

The theatre itself is just another theatre; in fact, as far as modern conveniences and comfort both for audience and actor go, the Palace would not even be considered third rate, but it has become a tradition, a myth, a fad if you will, and all the theatre's shortcomings are forgotten in the mad scramble to appear before its footlights. Its stage-hands and doorman are the most complacent lot that we have struck anywhere. Their egotism, born of the fact that they work at the Palace, is almost laughable and yet we found them very wonderful and co-operative. I dare say the Palace stage-hands get the highest tips of any stage-hands in the city; they expect them and receive them.

And here we were, on a Sunday morning, rank amateurs booked to play the Palace. There was a certain air of disbelief and incredulity on the part of the doorman and stage-hands. Still they knew something had happened or we never would have been there. I came down in their little old rickety elevator run by Morey, one of the oddest characters

we met anywhere, and to calm our nerves I went to the boys' dressing-room and asked them to listen to two verses of the melody I had in mind for the verse of "Vagabond Lover," because both verses were entirely my own work. About an hour later we found ourselves before that most blasé of all audiences, the most critical to be found anywhere, the Sunday afternoon Palace audience.

Before they raised the prices of the Sunday matinee, the first show on Sunday found in the audience every other vaudeville actor not working, and of course the Palace acts were on their toes realizing that they had the hardest audience in the world to please. Most of the vaudevillians now come on Monday afternoon since the Sunday price is a little high for anyone who can wait until Monday, when it is much cheaper.

You cannot always gauge results by applause. There is a contagion in the air *while you are playing* that tells you whether or not you are pleasing your audiences. To me the applause is superfluous; the telepathic interchange of appreciation with which the air becomes charged, is sufficient for me. I cannot recollect whether or not we received big hands, but I do know that they kept us there for three weeks and would have kept us longer but that the other Keith houses were calling for us and there were only a few weeks left for us to go

the rounds of the most important Keith houses in other sections of the city. Saturday night we found the coolest of all our audiences, but even their reception was gratifying. I was told that two very famous orchestra leaders, both of whom I admired tremendously, came to see us and could not comprehend the reason for this demonstration of applause. Had they really thought about the matter they would have realized that the applause we received on the stage was not so much a commendation of our *actual stage work* as it was an opportunity for our radio public to tell us just how much they appreciated our radio work, and that has always been my belief; *we are a radio band first, last and always.* Naturally I felt gratified and thrilled that these two men should take the trouble to come to see us, and it seemed incredible to me that they should be perturbed over our success, since they should have remembered that there is always room enough for another success and that there was no essential conflict between us.

We changed our show at the Palace almost completely, as we had plenty of numbers to present. Our audience there was composed largely of New Jersey people that our broadcast over Station WOR brought to us.

And then followed an engagement down at 14th Street. Here was the test. How would we fare down

in that ghetto-like section? Its audiences were mainly composed of slavic and oriental people. They received us just as enthusiastically as did our audiences elsewhere.

Then came Flushing. While at the beautiful new Keith theatre there, I discovered that Flushing was the home of my idol, Rudy Wiedoeft, and twice I made him come out on the stage while I told the audience what he had done for me and how highly I regarded him.

Then came the Bronx, and the cordiality of the Bronx was perhaps as great as that received in the Coliseum. In fact, we were wonderfully received everywhere we went.

The E. F. Albee Theatre in Brooklyn has always been noted for cool receptions, but even here we broke all records.

Our vaudeville tour came to an end at Proctor's 86th Street Theatre. Here I had my first taste of crowds at the stage door. Everyone seemed to want pictures, so I began having thousands of pictures printed to give away. I look back on these ten weeks of vaudeville as one of the happiest experiences of my life. For me it is proof of my belief that radio had built us up for appearances in vaudeville, and that an orchestra could be presented in a simple and dignified way without a great deal of moving, clowning, eccentric dancers or beautiful

women to bolster it up, and yet go over. How we would have fared without our radio prelude is problematical. However, even in places where we were not radio favorites, our reception was very wonderful.

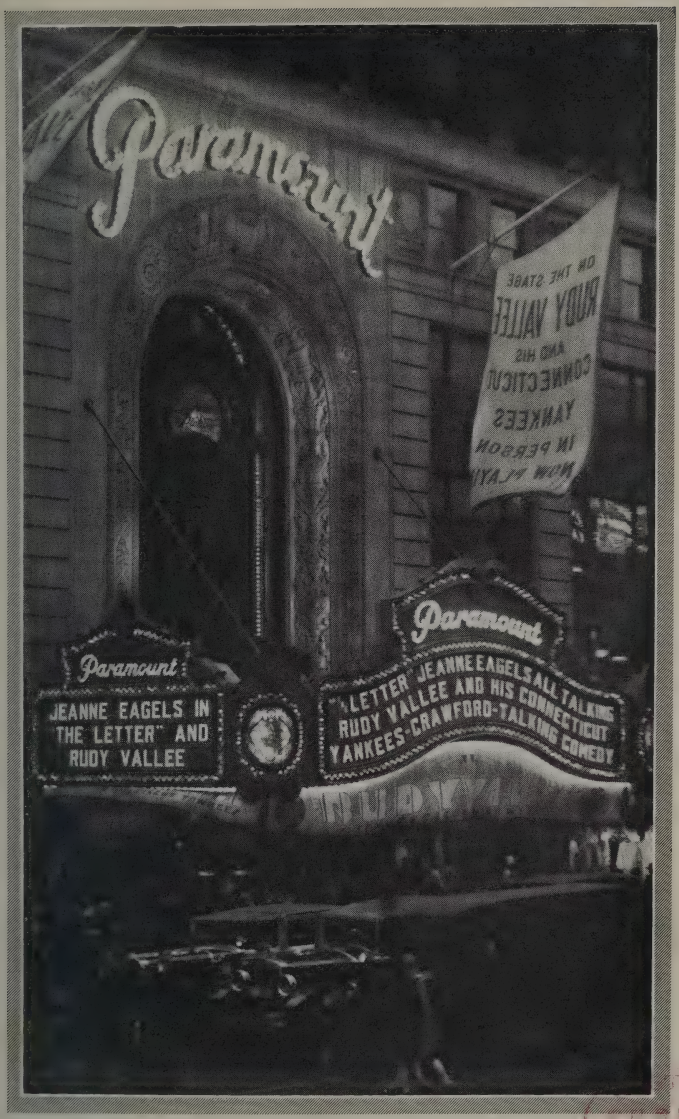
The ten weeks were enlivened by hair-breadth escapes from missing the show, and by one occasion at the Palace when two of the boys missed the show, leaving the six of us to pull the act through—we got a tremendous hand! (Imagine a six-piece orchestra at the Palace!) We improved in make-up and in stage technique and thus prepared ourselves for our appearance at the cross-roads of the world—the theatre that it had always been my goal to appear at once we had entered into showdom—the New York Paramount!

CHAPTER XI

LATE TO BED—EARLY TO RISE

BY THE time we were *half-way through our vaudeville career* I had aligned myself with the National Broadcasting Company completely. Before we began our vaudeville tour they held a broadcasting contract with me under which they broadcast me from the Villa Vallée with no cost to me or the club. Without my knowledge or permission I had been signed to play at a rival radio station which of course conflicted with my National Broadcasting contract. While we were at the Palace this had been litigated in court and on one occasion my appearance in court almost prevented me from getting to the Palace in time for our act. Every act there went on before ours and good old Van & Schenk dragged their act out as long as possible and stalled for me until I got there. Just before I went on, the manager gave me the good news of the judge's decision: the National Broadcasting Company and I had won completely!

I knew that to be under the management of the National Broadcasting Company gave me a tremendous prestige and would in the end secure me better contracts than any other management could.



Broadway At the Crossroads of the World

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The National Broadcasting Company secured my Paramount contract at double the figure that I had hoped for. Four thousand dollars a week for eight men even for a few weeks was unheard of, but when we did twenty weeks and Paramount announced its intention of exercising its year's option, the "I-told-you-sos" in the theatrical world who had predicted only ten weeks for us with Publix theatres were completely flabbergasted.

I went home for one day with my folks before we began the Paramount contract, as I realized that I would not see them for a long time; and a few days later, with banners flying outside the New York Paramount, we began our contract with Publix Theatres. I still have pictures of the crowds in line and I was told that police were called out to keep the lines in place. And the cold figures giving us the house record made me very happy.

The presentation for the week we opened was put together especially for us and we did just a tiny part at the end of the program, so we were still very much a vaudeville act, but I looked forward to my second week when, with baton in hand, it was my duty to make the announcements and direct the big orchestra on the stage, gag with the acts, set the tempos, and then eventually step forward for my own spot.

The Paramount management was frankly only

interested in Rudy Vallée, but I had told my boys that when I made money they would make it with me, and the only condition on which I agreed to go with Publix was that they use my band with me. I did not care whether my boys were absorbed into the large band or whether they came out on a rolling platform just to accompany me in my songs, but I insisted that my accompaniment come from my boys only. To this the management agreed, and then I was surprised to find my boys did not think they wanted to do it, inasmuch as they doubted their ability to stand up under the strain of two early rehearsals in the morning, four shows a day with five on Saturdays and Sundays, and work at the night club every night from eleven until three. My lot was considerably harder, though I enjoyed it.

I had tea dances at the Lombardy Hotel from four until six-thirty daily, including Sunday, and the dinner session at the Villa Vallée from 7:30 until 9:30. Obviously, our vaudeville made it impossible for my boys and me to play the *full* tea dance or the dinner session at the Villa Vallée, so at the Lombardy I formed an orchestra composed of six boys, which I called the Gondoliers, and which I had trained to play in practically the same style in which the Connecticut Yankees played. Over the air they sounded practically the same, as I had very excellent men who had substituted for

some of my boys at one time or another and who knew our style.

Although I could not be present for the entire tea dance at the Lombardy or the dinner session at the Villa, yet by driving fast in an automobile from one engagement to the other, it was possible for me to put in an appearance varying from a half-hour to an hour at both; but I was forced to engage another band for the dinner session at the Villa Vallée.

While we were playing Keith's Palace, a young man named Will Osborne met me at the stage door and asked me if I would listen to a little orchestra in which he was the drummer and leader, and which was playing at an Alice Foote MacDougall Coffee House. He had been using only one violin but had recently added a second violinist who, incidentally had at one time played for me in a band which I presented at Lake Placid. I realized that this new addition to his band would give it the same violin quality of tone that has made our orchestra distinctive on the air, and so I made it a point to listen to his orchestra and then suggested their engagement to the owner of the Villa Vallée, whose word was final in such matters. He was satisfied with their work and agreed to engage them to play during the dinner session.

Later on we even permitted this orchestra to

broadcast from the club during the dinner session, for the same jewelry concern for which my boys and I had previously broadcast for more than a year.

My daily schedule was this: Usually I arose at ten, but if it was a rehearsal morning for the Paramount, it was necessary to get up earlier in order to be there at 9:30. On these rehearsal mornings I met the various acts, learned their routines and their gags (jokes), and rehearsed our own specialty. The unit or stage presentation usually began at noon. After the *second* performance, somewhere around three o'clock, I jumped to the Lombardy where I sang for an hour and a half with the Gondoliers, then back to the Paramount for my *third* show. In my spare moments I listened to songs that various companies sent to me to try out; read and answered letters; autographed photos; and then went on for the *fourth* show.

Immediately after this I hopped into a cab and went to the Villa Vallée where I sang with the Osborne orchestra. It was necessary for me to show this orchestra how to play after my own style, because I have a peculiar style of singing *against the beat* which is very natural to me but which would throw the average band off if they were not instructed to hold the tempo, regardless of what liberties I took with the melody. Of course I also had to initiate the band into the way I played choruses

in sections, how we changed from one chorus to another, the tempos themselves, and the signals that I flashed out to them with my right hand when I was not using it to play the saxophone. I stayed at the Villa Vallée until about 9:30 when I rushed back to the Paramount for my *fifth* and last show. Then I returned with my own Connecticut Yankees to the Villa Vallée to play from eleven until three. Thus I had very little rest and usually went to bed quite tired. Between every number it was necessary for me to go out and welcome friends and radio fan guests who ask the waiter to have me come over to say hello. Much as I love work, this was a gruelling routine that most men would probably have cracked under, but I inherited a strong constitution, am very careful of what I eat, and I sleep well, when I have a chance to sleep, at no time have I ever felt the strain.

My boys did not find the Paramount work quite so difficult as they had anticipated, because in some of the presentations they did not appear until the last six minutes, and after that six minute period, during which we played several tunes, they were free until the next show. True, they could go nowhere, and could only see bits of other shows. But considering the actual effort involved, they had never earned money quite so easily. They bought cots for their dressing-rooms, which took on the

appearance of barracks, and spent the hours between shows in various ways.

Many people have wondered, I suppose, how I could be way over in Brooklyn at a theatre, broadcast from the Lombardy, be back at the next show in Brooklyn, and up to the Villa Vallée for dinner and fulfill all these engagements without splitting myself into three or four people. I have had to take some terrible chances in driving in order to make the various performances and I feel very proud of the fact that I have never missed a Paramount show or a broadcast. Once or twice I was late at the Lombardy for the broadcast, but I always managed to get in before the middle of the program was over to say "Heigh-Ho" and to sing a few songs.

Friday morning was a terrific strain on me as Master of Ceremonies because I retired at four or four-thirty from the club, arose at eight to be at the Paramount at nine where I rehearsed until twelve, when the first unit went on. I had to keep in mind every name, every tempo, and the order in which the acts came. Because of this loss of sleep, I could rarely give my very best to the first shows at the Paramount; and of course it would be only too tragic had I forgotten the name of an act, or cued them at the wrong time when they were not in the wings ready to go on. I had to

think very fast when certain emergencies arose. Once or twice my tired mind did not register the name of the next act and I had to invent one. At another time I announced a certain act, turned around, gave the band introduction, but no act! We repeated the introduction but still the artists did not appear! Then I quickly went into my own specialty.

Once a very laughable thing happened. I announced an artist and pointed to the right, and like the old Mack Sennett comedies he came in from the left, leaving me in a very ludicrous position. However, such things as that touch my sense of humor and I am able to laugh them off. In one unit I turned around after announcing an act that immediately followed the chorus girls, to find that one of the girls had fainted on the stage and had been left there as the line danced off. I thought fast. Should I say that at last one of the girls in the chorus had fallen for me, or should I ring down the curtain, or should I simply carry her off. I decided on the last named procedure and lifted and carried her off, leaving the audience unable to comprehend it all, while the show went on as before.

There is a certain fascination about the stage, the footlights, the smell of the grease paint, the crowds and the orchestra. But I will not be sorry when this is all over, because after all, it is a very

odd feeling that comes over me as I go to a restaurant or to a place of business between shows and realize that I must be back in costume, made-up and ready to go on in less than an hour and a half. A repetition of this procedure four times a day, five on Saturdays and Sundays, has broken the spirit of many men who did nothing but that, whereas I have also radio programs to be made up, work at the club each night, appointments between shows with people who seek aid, both employment and financial, and who try to interest me in insurance investments, advertising propositions, and various other problems, so that I lead a hectic and busy life, and always of course I must be learning new songs and thinking of our own specialty, which has to be changed weekly.

Also, six performances and two matinees will seem such a relief after thirty performances a week! And to have Sunday nights off and to be able to sleep Sunday morning will be a blessed relief, because after all, this is the day of rest and has been set apart for that purpose, but the Publix theatres do not agree with the Powers above and believe that one should work harder on that day.

The Villa Vallée remained open all summer, as it was air-cooled just like the interior of the theatre, and was extremely comfortable to play in. Osborne had played the dinner session over a period of four

months, but when I left to go to the Coast, the owner of the Villa Vallée made other arrangements and engaged Emil Coleman and his orchestra, which is very popular with New York society.

When I left for California, I said good-bye to the Paramount Theatres for a while, and it certainly felt strange to wake up in the morning and not wonder if I had overslept and missed the first show!

CHAPTER XII

FROM WESTBROOK TO HOLLYWOOD

In every interview that I have ever given I have been careful to state that my birthplace was a small town in Vermont called Island Pond. Most peculiarly, however, the interviewers have seen fit for some reason to omit this fact and to refer to me as a Maine boy. Probably this is due to the fact that I spent only two years of my life in Vermont. Although I grew up in Maine, I am very proud of my Green Mountain birthright, and the vacations I have spent in Island Pond were some of the most wonderful days of my life.

However, it was during my boyhood in Westbrook, Maine, that I first began to dream of the theatre. I must have inherited a love for all things theatrical from my father who, though a druggist all his life, had been associated with several theatres in various small business ways. Anyway it was always in the back of my head, and even when I was in the early grades of grammar school I used to climb up by the door of the motion picture booth and peek in to watch the film with fascinated eyes as it went past the aperture plate, with the bright light from the arc lamp shining on it; and the hum

of the machine as the operator cranked it by hand, and the smell of film and film cement meant as much to me as the picture itself.

My idea of perfect happiness in life was to be the manager of a theatre, who not only selected the films to be shown, but could sit in the theatre all day and watch them.

My last years of grammar school I knew I would have to help father in the drug store. I had grown into long pants and I began my first work in the drug store. Being rather dexterous with my hands and quick of mind I proved to be one of father's best clerks, but I never liked the work. It wasn't that I actually disliked manual labor; I never minded chopping eighteen pails of ice every day and bringing them upstairs and then packing the ice around the things that had to be kept cold (this was in the days before they had iceless refrigeration) nor did I mind opening the boxes containing countless small boxes and bottles which had to be put away in a thousand and one places in the store.

I enjoyed making the syrups, and usually gorged myself on them as I drew them from the large bottles in which they came—I was particularly fond of chocolate syrup and usually became sick from overindulgence.

But it was the fact that there was little of romance in waiting on customers who were slow in

making up their minds, and who were cross and disagreeable at times; it made me miserable. Then again there was nothing fixed about the hours, we worked from early morning until late at night. Many a time father and I were just about to close the store when a street car would stop in front of our place filled with people coming back from a near-by dance hall and rustic theatre, and again we would put on the lights, open the doors, and in a breathless rush serve forty and fifty people at the soda-fountain.

I had to rush out on cold days and pump gasoline, as we were one of the first drug stores to have a gasoline filling station. The only happiness I knew in the store was when father took on the sale of Victor phonograph records and I had a chance to give demonstrations to possible purchasers of these records. After I had played them twice over, I usually knew all the good and bad features of the records and could invariably whistle and hum along with them. I knew the selling points of each and very rarely failed to sell a record when I attempted to do so. The thing lasted all too short a time but its effect upon me was profound and tremendous.

A small event of great future import took place at the beginning of school vacation when a disagreement with the head clerk affected me so that

BOS
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

The Vallée Drug Store, Westbrook, Maine

I walked out of the store and went out swimming with the boys.

We had one small movie theatre in the town, the Star Theatre, which was my idea of the last word in motion picture theatres. I heard that a boy who worked as assistant operator was leaving his job and that the manager needed someone to take his place.

I *must* have loved things theatrical when I could get there early in the morning, sweep the entire theatre out, downstairs and balcony, with an ordinary broom, and between the two shows, sweep the places where thoughtless people had thrown their peanut shells, sweep out the projection booth, clean and oil both machines, change the carbons in the lamp house, rewind the films, help put out the posters, take care of the furnace, polish the brass around the billboard sheets in front, and even take tickets until the show began; but I got my reward!

I was given the poorer of the two projection machines to operate, and I will never forget the tremendous thrill when the chief operator roughly called to me, gave the crank a great twist, and left me, all a-tremble, to catch it before it stopped and to continue to project the film. I got one of the greatest thrills of my life as I looked out through the hole in the booth to see the personages on the screen who were all brought to life by the magic crank which I held in my hand.

But after standing there hours and hours in the unbearable heat of the booth, cranking for fifteen minutes at a time, always watching to see that the light showed properly on the film, I was somewhat less excited; still I always loved it.

The show changed three times weekly, and the three nights before the changes, the two-reel comedy had to be carried to Portland, six miles away, to be shipped to another theatre on the same chain. I tied the film on the carrier back of my bicycle and bicycled to Portland, left the film at the station and then wearily pedalled home. The point was that I saved the carfare; I felt very happy in the thought that I had earned the extra twenty cents.

For all my labors in the theatre six days a week (thank heaven there were no Sunday shows in Maine!) I received the magnificent sum of seven dollars, but I was prouder and happier when this pay envelope came to me than I had ever before been in my life, and although my father tried to prevent me from working there, he saw that I was determined and permitted me to continue at the theatre instead of working in the store.

I continued doing this for two years before I went to Maine's largest theatre, the Strand in Portland. After having served such an apprenticeship in pictures at so little money, it is not difficult to imagine the elation I felt when I left for Hollywood

with my boys, in a special car all our own, to be a star in my first picture at a salary of $11,000 a week.

The first night I went to sleep in my berth on the Pullman was perhaps the happiest of my life. I went off to sleep thinking that I was actually going to accomplish the thing that I had often dropped off to sleep dreaming about when just a boy.

The question "How did you enjoy making pictures?" to me is a silly one, because there can be no boy who has not at one time or another wanted to take part in a dramatic playlet that brings a beautiful woman into your arms, takes you with her through trials and misfortunes and finally brings the happy ending. It is fun enough to do this anyway, but to be paid for the effort is certainly doubling the pleasure of the task.

To some of the stars in Hollywood, picture making is extremely arduous, and of course it really is, but to my boys and me it was comparatively easy work after the very strenuous program that had been ours for months. Picture work seemed child's play after week after week of four and five shows a day, night club at night until three, early morning recordings, rehearsals, broadcasts, personal appearances, and what not.

True, picture making is a task, because the rehearsals and the final shooting of the picture are

much more difficult and nerve-wracking than were the rehearsals for those high school or community plays that most of us did not so long ago. And now, with the coming of sound to pictures, much more is demanded of the actor not only in voice but in talent and initiative during the filming of the scenes, since the talkies have shorn the director of his chance to direct the final shooting.

The talkies have brought doom and despair to many formerly successful stars, but hope and success to others who otherwise would never have succeeded. Such, I suppose, is my case, but since the technique of making sound pictures is almost identical with the principles of broadcasting, I began my career in pictures at the peak—as a star, thus eliminating all those other preliminary steps of extra or featured player.

In the choice of a story it was necessary to have one that would bring the seven boys into the picture and give them a logical reason for being there, but yet we wanted to avoid the hackneyed night club, back stage and college campus ideas. Nearly all of our sound pictures today deal with one of these three themes in order to bring music into the plot. Therefore, barred from the dramatic complications of these three angles we had to choose a very simple story.

My part, as I conceived it, was that of a shy,

embarrassed boy who was in a group of orchestra boys who considered themselves superior to him; a boy whose high idealistic principles caused him to be conscience-stricken throughout the entire picture due to the deception which he was practicing. Furthermore, being in a daze of puppy-love from the moment I met the heroine of the story, I was continually in hot water. There was little opportunity on my part for very much animation or life, and hardly a chance to smile. What we commonly term "personality" is made up of just those things. The part was practically "personality-less," but it gave me a real excuse for everything I did, especially the singing of my songs, which after all, was perhaps the most important thing in the making of the picture.

Before we left for the Coast I listened daily to eight or ten songs, and finally from a group of nearly two hundred I selected the four songs which are in the picture. It was necessary that I do this in my dressing-room at the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre at which we were playing. It was in the hot summer time and I came off the stage very tired from the heat and stage work, but between every show it was necessary that I hear these songs over and over again in order to make up my mind.

I do not believe absolutely in first reactions, rather do I believe that it is necessary to hear a

melody several times in order to pass judgment, and it is really best to hear the melody at intervals of several days, and then if a tune does not come back and haunt the mind it usually has little merit. I rated the songs like themes in school, A, B plus, B, and so forth.

The story was still very vague when we left for the Coast, so I carried eight songs marked A with us, hoping that at least four would fit in the picture. Whatever their opinion of the picture as a whole, the critics have usually complimented us on the spotting of the songs and their rendition, and the fact that all four are selling excellently, and one, "A Little Kiss Each Morning," is the outstanding hit today, makes me feel very happy. One of the songs, "If You Were The Only Girl In The World" is a tune about twelve years old, but had failed so miserably as a fox trot that its publishers had soured on it. I tried to convince them that it was a hit song if played as a slow waltz. This idea, too, has proved itself since the picture came out.

Our trip came as a wonderful relaxation, and to some of the boys it was a belated honeymoon, as all of them brought their wives. The bass player and I are the only single ones. I took my best sweetheart, my dear mother, and my father. Feeling that he had worked long enough in the drug store, having been behind the counter twelve and fourteen

hours a day for twenty years, I wrote my father to sell the store and come West with us on this glorious trip.

We have relatives in Pasadena, and father and mother were very happy visiting, watching us make the picture and attending the social functions with me which Hollywood and Los Angeles showered upon us.

From the time we left the Pennsylvania station, with the goodbyes of fans, newspaper men, publishers and others ringing in our ears, it was one constant reception in every town of any size we stopped at. They even woke me in the middle of the night to pose for the newspaper cameramen of the various towns we went through, while a radio delegation or a representative of the theatres that sponsored our picture greeted me.

At Chicago I was tendered a delightful breakfast with the press in attendance.

But the biggest surprise of all came as we neared Los Angeles when, a few miles out, fifty representatives of the press and screen magazines climbed aboard the train. After dinner and refreshments I became the target for their interviews. But I had become accustomed to the questions and it was a pleasure to answer them.

Then we drew in to Los Angeles to find a tremendous delegation waiting for us—movie camera-

men with bright lights, fifteen girls from the studio and a big crowd of radio fans and curious onlookers. The Sheriff of Los Angeles was also there with letters of welcome from both the Governor of California and the Mayor of Los Angeles.

The studio girls, who form the dancing chorus of such productions as "Rio Rita," surrounded me, making a general wreck of me as they pushed and pulled me about among them. Then I was presented with a big saxophone of wood and a large gold key.

After a formal ceremony, pictures were taken of me with my parents, and of the Sheriff and myself, and microphone recordings of our response to the greeting were made. We were then escorted to a Rolls-Royce and, followed by a long line of cars carrying my boys and various officials, started for Hollywood, the sirens of four motor cycle cops securing the right-of-way for our procession the entire distance. This last gave my mother the greatest thrill she ever had, and I can still hear her, hysterically half-laughing, half-crying. It was really wonderful.

At the Hotel Roosevelt in Hollywood we were greeted by Irving Aaronson and his Commanders, playing my own "I'm Just A Vagabond Lover," and our welcome was complete.

As the last part of the trip across the desert had been almost unbearable and we were all feeling very tired, we retired at once.

My faith in the production head and scenario writer was justified, as the story of the picture was simple enough and yet of sufficient interest to make it a fine vehicle for our work.

I was most fortunate in having Marshall Neilan as director of my first motion picture; he is not alone a great director, but a very human individual with a great understanding of my songs and a keen insight into the art of recording them, being a fine musician himself. His crew of lighting experts (who can make or mar the features of the players) the sound recorders, the cameramen, the make-up man, who after some study finally evolved my best make-up, all helped to solve the difficulties of picture making that I had dreaded most of all.

Such notables as Marie Dressler, Sally Blane, Charles Sellon and others of wide and varied experience, who were in the cast, did much toward making the picture a success. In fact the honors are entirely Marie Dressler's. Everything in and about the studio was perfect, everyone gave his co-operation, we did our best, and if it seems not to please our great film public it will be just that it was not to be.

We were wonderfully received in Hollywood, being the recipients of receptions at Breakfast Club, Masquers, Montmartre, and many other places, but our greatest reception was in the Blossom Room of the Roosevelt Hotel. It was a Tuesday evening, and

the room was filled to overflowing with the greatest collection of notables and stars of the movie world I have ever seen under one roof.

Many of these were famous when I used to crank films in the booth of the little Star Theatre, and the feeling that went over me as I saw them there honoring me with their presence made me very happy indeed.

On the eve of our departure for New York I was happy to give a banquet in the Cocoanut Grove of the Ambassador, and everyone who had participated in the making of our picture, from the greatest to the humblest "grip" who carried the lamps and helped move everything, was there. It was a wonderful evening; Ted Lewis was playing there, everybody was happy and the place was jammed. Of course there were speeches, and we left with a wonderful feeling in our hearts for California and Hollywood.

With faces turned to New York, we set out for our routine of continuous work again; but all the time I was on the Coast I received pleading letters from those who missed our radio programs, those who were confined to sick-rooms and who really looked for our return with longing, I felt that I owed an allegiance to them and looked forward to playing for them on the air once again.

For a time we feared that our picture had

been destroyed in the vaults of the company where they made the reproductions of the original. But it was saved and only small parts destroyed. At any rate, I will never forget its première and the wonderful thrill of pleasure that I received when after what seemed an interminable burst of applause I stepped out on the stage to say a few words and express my appreciation to RKO and everyone who had helped us to make it.

Perhaps the greatest honor conferred upon me was the wonderful way in which my home town turned out en masse to see the picture. The Mayor, Kiwanians, Rotarians and American Legion all united in declaring the day on which the picture was first shown a municipal holiday. A long procession of automobiles and street cars went from Westbrook to Portland, over the same route that I used to bicycle over with the two-reel comedy film, to do homage to a local son in his first talking picture.

In most places the picture was well received. It was not intended to be elaborate, but a simple and logical entrance for me into the movies. In my second picture I hope to show that I am capable of the things that have come to be expected of motion picture stars.

CHAPTER XIII

DID COLLEGE HELP ME?

I HAVE occasionally been asked whether or not I thought that my college training was responsible for my success.

Like most questions I believe that is a difficult one to answer with a single negative or affirmative since it requires much discussion and explanation.

There has always been animosity on the part of many people who have never attended a university toward those who have. This is probably subconsciously prompted by envy and regret as there are very few who will not admit that if they had the opportunity they would go to college.

It is true that in the past the requirements for entering college, for remaining within its walls, and for securing a degree were not as exacting as they are today. There were not so many applications for admission as the average college receives today, and there was a looseness about the times that was felt in the classrooms and on the campus.

But today the average college can accommodate only one third of the men who apply for admission each fall. Therefore the board of admission and the faculty feel that in justice to the thou-

sands who are turned down, those admitted should give the best in them in an effort to utilize all of the wonderful advantages that the college affords them. In other words, among those refused admission are many who perhaps would give anything to have been admitted and who would work very hard, and for the more fortunate ones who are safely in to rest on their oars and become, as it were, slackers, is an injustice to these others.

I do not know a great deal about the requirements of other colleges but I do know that to enter, stay within and graduate from Yale requires work, hard work and plenty of it. Neither money, family prestige nor athletic ability will keep a man in Yale University; and I have seen some of the biggest athletes severely penalized for misdemeanors that seemed comparatively slight. In fact, the faculty at New Haven has just as high a regard for the fifty percent of the men who are working their way through as they have for the remainder.

It is an absolute impossibility for a young man to remain for the four years of a college course within this university (and I firmly believe such is the case in nearly all of our other American universities) without being tremendously affected by his classroom and social contacts. It is unreasonable to suppose that one could associate with

the eager, fresh and talented minds of students and the cultured, highly specialized minds of the faculty without receiving some sort of impression. It is impossible to cheat in the classrooms and it is impossible to pass most of the courses without reading and study.

Therefore it is an unavoidable fact that those who march in cap and gown at Commencement have, perhaps in spite of themselves, received a great deal from their college life.

There are also the social contacts that come from rubbing shoulders with all the types that are found in classrooms. The mind is like a camera plate, unconsciously receptive of accents, manners, customs in dress, expressions of thought. And of course especially when an individual seeks to pattern himself after the most popular men on the campus and the natural leaders, within this period of four years he can transform himself in manners, speech, thought and action. There must be contact in the classrooms and at meal times; therefore, no matter how much a student may intend to live the life of a hermit he must be affected by his classmates.

The text-books, written as they are by great minds and expounded to the students by specialists in the various subjects, help to mould the thoughts of the students who must read them. The college

courses of today are so regulated that one must take a well-balanced group of subjects. Even though the student may have a leaning toward the sciences, the faculty has learned that a sprinkling of the arts in a scientific course gives a more rounded education, and very often those who thought they wanted scientific subjects have found out, through being compelled to take an artistic course, that they prefer the arts.

I took a course that gave me a little of everything.

There is little question in my mind that nearly everything I took has aided me, not only in my musical work, but in my general life. My biology has helped me in my mode of living through the knowledge and understanding of my physical self which it gave me. My courses in English have helped me to express myself more fluently, sensibly and entertainingly. My economics and courses in history have made it possible for me to understand and appreciate everyday events that I read or hear about. The several courses I took in the Yale Music School have aided me in an appreciation of dramatic music and the development of music, which have resulted in making my life's work all the more interesting. I had majored in Spanish with the intention of using it in South America as a stage band director or a night club orchestra leader; it has helped me

in the vocal rendition of several tangos that have made our programs all the more unusual.

But it is the study of psychology that has really aided me in my music and contributed to my success in the various lines in which I now find myself; in the handling and treatment of those under me and those above me, my study of the various branches of psychology has been of great use to me. Just one little psychological talk on speech making, by one of the department heads who had made it his pet subject, has aided me in my delivery, not only on the stage but at various formal and informal functions at which I have been asked or expected to say something. Moreover, psychology has been extremely valuable to me in shaping my judgment of what to play, when to play it and how to play it. It has helped me in my selection of tunes that looked like successful songs, and in my judgment of the crowds we play to.

Although for my own part the native talents that came to me through inheritance are greatly responsible for my achievements, I feel that my college training has helped me in many ways that I know of and many more that I am not directly aware of. Certainly a college training has never hurt an individual.

The boy who does nothing but carouse and dissipate at college would probably be even worse out

In the Yale Bowl—As Band Leader (Fall, 1926)

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

of college as, after all, that is a question of character and I really believe that the requirements of college in classrooms and in sports make for the betterment of the individual and equip a man with a certain something that marks him apart from the rest of the community in which he continues to work after graduation.

CHAPTER XIV

JAZZ

PAUL WHITEMAN titled his book with this much abused term.

Personally, I would not have dared to have done likewise because I do not believe that I sufficiently understand what the term means to talk about it; and I have found, upon questioning those who use the word frequently and seemingly with understanding, that in reality they know nothing at all specific as to its meaning.

To some it is "peppy" music, to others a lot of noise, and to still others it is the waving of instruments in the air. I have found no two people who give the same definition of the word.

The real propagators of the word were a group of men in New York, who, back in 1918 and 1919, banded together and called themselves the Dixieland Jazz Band. The outstanding characteristic of their records, as I recall "The Ostrich Walk" was that there was no distinguishable melody; every man seemed to be striking out for himself, playing a part of his own and only taking care that it did not conflict with the general harmony. These men

were the first to use the term, and through their success the word came into wide-spread popularity.

But today "jazz" is applied to almost any form of orchestra or band music which is not strictly classical, and this is a grave error, inasmuch as dance music may be just as sweet and beautiful as true classical music. Therefore I believe it is absolutely incorrect to use the word so indiscriminately.

The unusual feature of my own orchestra is a clearly defined melody at all times, therefore I do not see how we could rightly be characterized as a "jazz" band; and I would not term our music "jazz," even though I occasionally "laugh" on the saxophone and others in the band play what we term "blue" notes and unusual rhythms.

Whenever possible I correct any publicity that would style our little group of eight a "jazz" band, or me a "jazz" band leader.

"Blue" notes are simply an exaggerated sliding up and down of the pitch of the note and this is studied in legitimate music, just as arpeggios, rhythms, chromatic runs and accents are all studied and used in legitimate music and in the highest of classical music.

Truly I have no definite conception of what "jazz" is, but I believe that the term should be applied, in view of the fact that such music came up from the South, to the weird orchestral efforts of

various colored bands up in Harlem, the Negro section of New York City. These bands have a style all their own, and at times it seems as though pandemonium had broken loose. Most of the time there is no distinguishable melody; in fact even though they are playing a popular tune with a definite melody, it is absolutely impossible for even a musical ear to tell the name of the piece.

It was the similar style of colored musicians in the South (New Orleans to be exact), that first prompted this group of white men, to adopt that type of music and style themselves the Dixieland Jazz Band.

But the public uses many words the meanings of which are very vague and doubtful, and a crusade on my part to attempt to show that the word is incorrectly used in the majority of cases, where the instrumentalist is simply employing legitimate and basic rudiments of music, would be absurd. A little reflection on the part of most anyone who thinks at all will show that the word "jazz" nine times out of ten is misapplied.

Although Whiteman's music is really symphonized syncopation, occasionally he permits his brass team to play in this Negro style and since he is unquestionably the king of all dance orchestra leaders, he is rightly termed "The Jazz King."

CHAPTER XV

THE SAX GOD—WIEDOEFT

PROBABLY most people connect my name with the saxophone, but only a few know that all my life I have had a great desire to play some sort of a musical instrument. I went from drums to clarinet, to trumpet, to saxophone.

The clarinet I studied faithfully for ten weeks and then was forced to neglect it, due to a very hard job in a sawmill during the summer vacation. When I think of how close I came to losing my fingers I thank my lucky stars that I finished that summer's work without receiving so much as a scratch from a saw. Many times when I worked on the "edger," the saw teeth striking a knot in the board would throw it back so that the palm of my hand just missed the teeth.

I took up the study of the trumpet while working back stage with a stock company, and then rented a saxophone when I began my senior year in school. The similarity between saxophone and clarinet made it possible for me to play a limited range of notes on the saxophone. The horn that I had was called a C Melody, being pitched in C. I could read song sheets, the violin parts, without any

transposition. I used to play at night with several acquaintances who gathered in a bowling alley where near beer was served, and go canoeing with a banjo player or a violinist. Always I played for my own amusement and for those who cared to listen. Finally I was engaged by a small dance orchestra playing two nights a week in a Pythian Temple Building. This led to more engagements with various other bands and a summer engagement in northern Maine with what had been Maine's most famous dance orchestra, Welch's Novelty Orchestra.

By that time I had begun to think I was quite a saxophonist; the boys in that band, and in fact every band I played with, made so much of me that I was very pleased with my progress.

I had read somewhere, possibly in a Victor catalogue, about a Victor record that Joseph C. Smith and his orchestra had played called "Caravan." This was the composition of a young man, a saxophonist by the name of Rudy Wiedoeft, who, the article said, dropped in when Smith was recording the number and played a chorus of variations which were truly marvelous. Just before I had left for the summer engagement in northern Maine I had listened to a record that this young man had made with another saxophonist and two pianos (these four called themselves the Wiedoeft-Wadsworth

Quartet). On this record, called "The Crocodile," the saxophones had employed a peculiar form of tongueing known as "slap tongue" because it gives forth from the bell a sound very much akin to that produced by two boards being slapped together. I noticed that this always intrigued the layman even as it did me. After experimenting a little bit with the mouthpiece and reed, I stumbled onto this effect, and it stood me in great stead in those early days, and brought a lot of attention to my playing, as many saxophonists are not able to do it.

Then in the fall when I returned from the summer engagement, the Victor Company released the first solo played by Rudy Wiedoeft on the same type of instrument that I used, the C Melody. Both numbers were his own compositions and one of them is his *pièce de résistance,* the one that he is always associated with, namely "Saxophobia." They are masterpieces even today, and I truthfully believe no one could record them in quite the way Wiedoeft did. Although Wiedoeft's beautiful tone was apparent in "The Crocodile" it remained for this wonderful record of "Valse Erica" and "Saxophobia" to show me the great possibilities of the saxophone as a *concert solo instrument.*

I wrote Wiedoeft, asking him a few technical questions. The weeks dragged by but no reply came, so I wrote a second, and a third, and a fourth, and

so on until I had written eight letters. I made up my mind that if persistence counted for anything, I would hear from him, but I did not realize that I was writing to perhaps the busiest man in New York City. Between phonograph records, solo appearances, and a thousand and one pressing engagements, Rudy Wiedoeft had no time for answering fan mail. Then again, Rudy dislikes letter writing, not being of a particularly literary turn of mind. I did not hear from him until I came down with acute appendicitis in December, 1920. This time, noting that I was sick and in the hospital, he answered my letter, replying to my questions in full.

I had begun the study of the saxophone with a man who had had many years' experience with the instrument. This man decried the use of "slap tongue" as being "illegitimate," and perhaps it was pity for my helplessness in the hospital combined with irritation at the criticism of "slap tongue" by this instructor that made Wiedoeft reply. Anyway, he censured my instructor roundly for daring to criticize him, inviting him to come to New York City where, as he said, the phonograph business was open, and any one of the phonograph companies would welcome him with open arms if he were as good a saxophonist as he was a critic. Wiedoeft's final point impressed me very strongly. He said that anything is legitimate so long as it produces

the goods. I never quite forgot that statement, and although it is not actually or completely true, it comes pretty near being.

During my convalescence several more of Wiedoeft's records had come out. He had become the rage of all the phonograph companies and had made records for all of them; he had his dance band that he called the Californians, his Palace Trio, his Wiedoeft-Wadsworth Quartet, his solos, and his interludes with Henry Burr and various other vocalists who had him take up the melody for half a chorus to make a contrast.

As my side was healing, I made up my mind that when I got out I would begin the study of the saxophone, using as my pattern and guide Rudy Wiedoeft's records and my own intelligence, and when I came to an effect or a point that puzzled me, I resolved to work it out by myself, so I never went back to the instructor with whom I had intended to study. In passing, I might say that the instructor did impress upon me one important point, and that is the fact that tone comes first, and that the only way to secure it is to play long tone scales; he also assisted me in the selection of a new horn, for which I was always grateful.

This new instrument had come while I was in the hospital. There had been a drain in my incision, which of course left a weakened spot in my side.

As a boy I was always impatient and eager to do things and could never be restrained when it was something near and dear to my heart, and the day I came home from the hospital I committed a folly for which I was to pay dearly years later. The family left me alone that afternoon knowing that I needed nothing and that it was safe for me to inspect my instrument. But I could not resist the impulse to play it even though the doctor had cautioned me that dire results would follow were I to attempt to blow my saxophone. The temptation was too great. Had it been my old instrument with reed and mouthpiece adjusted so that I could play with a minimum of effort, probably I would not have suffered, but it was a new instrument, stiff and cold, which even today I would have difficulty in playing. Trembling and expecting any moment that darkness would close in upon me and that I would fall senseless to the floor, I took the new instrument into my hands and blew a few notes . . . nothing happened . . . no pain . . . so I continued to blow.

Of course, I put the horn away before my family returned, and the next day I showed my horrified mother that I could play the instrument and nothing would happen. But without knowing it I was weakening the muscles of my side in the place where the drain had been, and two years later it

was necessary for me to spend the two most beautiful weeks of a golden September in the hospital at New Haven while Dr. William F. Verdi, one of the greatest surgeons in the East, performed the operation gratis, as I did not have the money to pay for his wonderful services. He made my side stronger than ever for which I shall always be grateful, and this time I did not begin playing until he told me that it was permissible for me to do so.

Recovering from the first operation, I resolved to practice four and five hours a day as I read Wiedoeft had done, and to perfect myself so that Wiedoeft would be forced to reckon with me. With his pictures on the wall as an inspiration and a taunt, I locked myself in my room and practiced so long at times that the neighbors nearly went mad, and my poor mother became distracted through fear that I would injure myself. My practicing after luncheon annoyed my father so that he expressed himself vehemently about it, and so I set out to find a place where I could practice and not feel that I was disturbing anyone.

The old Scenic Theatre in our little home town where I had once given away "grab bags" of candy for my father, as an advertisement for my father's store, was now closed. I went there to practice for awhile but my father soon became reconciled to my

home practice, which I continued during the years I took a post-graduate course in High School. I had begun the study of several Wiedoeft saxophone solos with the aspiration to present them somewhere. The first time that I presented a solo was at a Sunday afternoon meeting at the Y. M. C. A. in Portland, Maine, where the big Y. M. C. A. orchestra supplied the diverting part of Sunday afternoon meetings after talks by famous ministers and leaders. On Easter Sunday I played "The Palms" and another Sunday I played Victor Herbert numbers and beautiful songs such as "The Sunshine of Your Smile," "A Perfect Day," and so forth.

Then came my first chance as a soloist on a stage in a spotlight! The Portland lodge of the Elks had their annual minstrel show in the Jefferson Theatre, where I had once served as assistant property boy. It was in this theatre that I had learned to worship Robert Gleckler for his tremendous personality, had polished the boots he wore in the war play, "Lilac Time," had brought him food to his dressing-room and had admired him from afar. Perhaps one of my greatest happinesses came recently when this same Robert Gleckler, who was one of the stars of the plays "Broadway," "The Tavern," "Heads Up," and many other shows, took the trouble to come back stage to congratulate me on my work.

The Elks spotted me in the middle of their program for a couple of solo choruses of a popular song, and although I was trembling with fright, I played the number well enough to receive a wonderful ovation.

During the summer that followed I played at a pavilion on an island in Portland Harbor. It was then I arranged to matriculate at the University of Maine the following fall. During that summer I was told that the young leader of the Strand Theatre orchestra, one theatre in which I had worked as head usher, wished to see me. I knew what was on his mind and dreaded meeting him. I knew that he wanted me to play some saxophone solos at intermission, and I knew that I could easily be talked into doing it. But feeling that I could not do justice to them, I avoided meeting him. Finally, however, he cornered me and convinced me that I could do it. Then he began making the orchestral parts for the accompaniment to the solos. After agreeing, I practiced very hard down in the pavilion on the island where I played for dancing. Often on the hottest days I shut myself up in the room and practiced with no windows open, because the inhabitants of the island had complained to the owner of the pavilion that my practicing was worse than a fog horn, with its endless monotony of scales and long tones (which I some-

times held for two minutes and practiced for four and five hours at a time!).

I recall the day when President Harding came up on his yacht, going, I believe, to New Hampshire for his vacation. I left my practice long enough to go out and watch the "Mayflower" steam past the island; but except for that, nothing ever took me from my practice. I was determined that I would play "Saxophobia" and "Valse Erica" and do justice to them. Two years from the September that the chief electrician of the Strand had presented me with a saxophone he was renting from a Portland music store, I stepped out on the stage to play "Valse Erica" and "Saxophobia" while this same electrician manipulated the lights to give me the right lighting effect. As well as I learned these two numbers, I did not know them so thoroughly but that my nervousness on the opening performance, (yes, and even to the last one!) made me sometimes skip whole cadenzas, when my trembling fingers refused to obey my mind.

However, the crowds seemed to like them, and I will never forget the effect it had upon my father. Up to this time he had always called me a "cheap faker" and had been comparatively unwilling to help me with my instruments. In fact, he had considered the plating of the instruments an extravagance which he refused to countenance, and I

pawned my clarinets in order to silver-plate my newest saxophone. I had told him nothing of my coming appearance at the Strand Theatre and I watched the expression on his face when he read the big announcement in the Sunday paper after Sunday dinner. He said nothing but I knew that he was profoundly affected by the announcement. He had to be shown, as I believe many people did, but I know that my mother always felt that I would amount to something with my music.

Portland is practically Maine, and that Strand Theatre appearance did wonders for me because it made me quite an important musical figure in Maine. At the University of Maine at which I matriculated in the fall, the Strand Theatre appearance did much toward causing the fraternities to rush me. In fact, my saxophone brought me a great deal of happiness at the University.

During all this time I had not forgotten my resolve to make Wiedoeft some day acknowledge me, and I still followed all the musical magazines for news or notes about him. I had every record he had ever played on; I knew all the gossip there was to know about him; in fact, I ate, drank and talked Rudy Wiedoeft so much that it earned for me the nickname of "Rudy." I had been pledged by Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and I moved into a room there with three other boys. They had given me

one wall of the room for my pictures, which were all of Wiedoeft. Every new man was brought into that room to listen to me play along with Wiedoeft's records, which I had learned to do by tuning the phonograph so that it corresponded with the pitch of my saxophone. Some fellow, seeing all these pictures and records, misunderstood, or perhaps intentionally began the monicker of "Rudy" from which I have never been able to get away. After awhile it became so natural and pleasant and seemed to go so well with the "Vallée" that I hardly recognized my given name of "Hubert."

I was now confronted by the problem of preparing my studies, going to my classes, playing in the evening to earn my tuition, and yet continuing the study of the saxophone as a solo instrument. It sometimes took me hours to select and find a perfect reed. I went through dozens of reeds which I could ill afford before I found one that answered my purpose. I used the sleeping chamber of the fraternity house for practice in the afternoon until I realized that even there I disturbed the study of my brothers in the fraternity, so I moved next to the town hall, which was a mile from the campus. I engaged the opera house at a nominal cost per month to practice in. There were no offices in this two-story edifice, just a cellar and a small auditorium; consequently there was no heat during the

day and very little even on the nights of functions. I purchased a small electric heater of the circular coil type, but no matter how I adjusted it, it only heated half of my body at a time; consequently, when my feet were being kept warm, my fingers froze, and vice versa.

On one particular morning I was scheduled to play solos at chapel at noon. In order that my jaws and fingers should be in working order for the solo at noon, I got up at 5:30 in the morning, and practiced from 6 to 7:30 in the cold town hall so that at noon I would be able to do justice to the songs. It was quite an effort, what with loss of sleep and suffering from the cold, but it was worth it.

Sometimes it did not seem as though I was going to have time to practice my long tones which was the only way I could improve my tone and keep it constant; and since these long tones required no mental concentration I would practice them while reading over one of my courses of the interesting type, such as history or psychology, something where there was no figuring or mental perplexity. I had prepared two new Wiedoeft solos which I presented at the Strand the first week of Christmas vacation.

An amusing incident occurred there that week. When I had been head usher in the theatre several

years previously, the director of the orchestra had been a rather irate individual, inclined to be very tempestuous. He also played the violin. One day as I watched him unpacking some violins from a case in which they had come he became annoyed with me, standing there watching him, and ordered me out of the dressing-room. Times had changed since I was head usher, and at this particular Christmas time he was only one of the violinists in the orchestra; the present leader, the young man who had asked me to do the solos, had returned from the Rhine where he had been with the Army of Occupation. As coincidence would have it, I occupied the same dressing-room in which this former leader had unpacked his violins. I left nothing in it but my tuxedo hanging on the wall and never locked the door since there was really nothing to take. One day I walked in to find several of the musicians smoking and talking in my room, which was on a level with the stage, their own room being down below, and believe it or not, this same violinist-director asked me if I minded their smoking in my dressing-room! However, I bore him no ill-will and did not remind him of the time when he had been quite unkind and I suppose he never remembered it.

At Easter vacation my dream came true! I had been writing to Wiedoeft's manager, Joseph Davis, who was also a music publisher, and in whose little

office Wiedoeft had a still smaller room. Mr. Davis promised me that if I came to New York he would arrange an appointment, so at Easter time I set out with high hopes of meeting Rudy Wiedoeft, hearing Paul Whiteman, and making a solo on a record, for which privilege I paid fifty dollars, the savings of many months. All three of my dreams were realized and of course the greatest thrill was that of meeting my idol, whom I found to be just as gracious and charming as I hoped he would be. I asked him if I should give up my school and go into music entirely, and he replied that by all means I should get my college education, so I often thank Wiedoeft for helping me in my decision to secure my degree. He allowed me to watch his band recording and gave me several hours of his time, which, of course, was quite priceless. I have never forgotten his kindness and I resolved that some day I would repay him.

The next summer I had resolved to transfer to Yale where there was more opportunity for work, moreover, New Haven's proximity to New York guaranteed me many things. During the summer I received a wonderful offer to play in London for the winter at a very fine salary, with a guarantee of many records and concerts, and the opportunity to study at London University. I gave no definite answer until I met the group of men

who were sailing; luckily I met them only four days before they sailed when it was too late for me to get my passport, because they persuaded me to go. Rather than go alone, I turned it down and they sailed without me. Thus I can thank the regulations regarding passports for saving me from losing what I value most, my college education.

I entered Yale the following fall and still continued to practice. In a short while I found that I disturbed the other students in the dormitory by my practicing, so I paid fifty cents an afternoon for a Swedish fraternity hall where I practiced to my heart's content. It took quite a walk to reach it but the complete freedom that I experienced while practicing was worth it. I played at the dining-hall nightly and played at country clubs and golf clubs and deb parties with the orchestra with which I was associated during my four years at college.

The summer of 1923 a group of us under the direction of Peter Arno, the famous artist whose clever drawings adorn *The New Yorker*, played for Gilda Gray at the "Rendezvous," taking the place of the Cornell Collegians who had gone to Long Island during the summer. I bumped into Wiedoeft several times, and he was always kind and courteous. Even though he had already told me all I wanted to know, it was still an inspiration

to meet him, and of course I was helped considerably when he played even a few measures for me of some solo or other. I also met Don Clark, first saxophonist with Whiteman, whom I have mentioned before. He was likewise a great friend and admirer of Wiedoeft's and owed much of his development to Wiedoeft, as they had both begun at practically the same time in California. Don was very wonderful to me and gave me considerable help. He has since retired and I count him among my staunch friends, and one whose friendship I hope I never lose.

I saw Wiedoeft just before I underwent the second operation on my side and he wished me the best of luck.

Then came another year, 1924, at Yale, a summer in Maine with a Boston orchestra, and the final acceptance of the London offer which had been continually forced on me ever since I had rejected it.

While in London (Sept., 1924 to June, 1925), I instructed over fifty pupils implanting in them the Wiedoeft method and ideas and holding Wiedoeft —and his records—up before them as my God, who, should also be theirs.

I returned in July and played again in Maine. It was in Maine that I first did a little singing. The summer of 1924, and the summer of 1925, for no reason at all I had taken it upon myself to sing

such numbers as "St. Louis Blues," "I Ain't Got Nobody," and several other songs. The summer of 1924, I had played with a small society orchestra and most of the times that I sang the crowd gathered around to listen to the words which seemed to fascinate them. Although they applauded me heavily I never thought any more about attempting to feature myself as a vocalist. When I returned to Yale the orchestra with which I had been playing threw cold water on my vocal efforts. Although they considered me a capable saxophonist, it was immaterial to them whether I attempted to sing or not, and as no one ever asked me, my megaphone remained unused. This I can readily understand, as after all my voice is not strong and at most of the affairs we played the crowd was very noisy. Society chatters while it dances and my vocal efforts were practically wasted on the air.

After I returned from London, I met Wiedoeft and this time it was *he* who thanked me for publicizing him in England as the publishers there had told him that I had caused an increasing demand for his records and solos. He asked me if I thought he would go well in England. Feeling that I had sown the seed for his personal appearance, I advised him by all means to appear there. He did so a year later and was very well received.

I continued to practice though not quite so steadily as before, since it gradually began to dawn on me that even the world's greatest saxophonist was not overpaid, and that a business career in South America, with a knowledge of Spanish and English, might mean more of a fortune than all the saxophonic skill in the world.

The following summer I was in vaudeville with a group of Yale boys whom I did not lead; I was just the saxophone soloist playing one of Wiedoeft's solos and simple encores like "Kiss Me Again." The following fall, the greatest of my collegiate ambitions was realized: I led the Yale band in the big bowl. I organized a saxophone quintet which played "Bye, Bye, Blackbird" and various other songs and received a tremendous ovation. That fall I appeared as saxophone soloist at one of the local theatres.

After graduation I once more did a tour of vaudeville with the Yale Collegians, though this time I did not play saxophone solos but sang the lead in a trio and played first sax in the orchestra.

Following the break-up of the act in September, when the rest of the students re-entered Yale, I played in New Haven at the arena, during a "Radio Week," with the orchestra with which I had been associated while in Yale. Here I got my first glimpse of the great McNamee. As there were no radios

at Yale it had never been my good fortune to "listen in" except once, to a big prize-fight. But I knew that McNamee was a man greatly admired throughout the United States for his ability to broadcast sporting events, and I was as much charmed by his wonderful personality as any of those present in the arena the night of the radio show that he appeared. Little did I realize then just what radio was to do for me.

I went next to Boston in the fall of 1927 where I played with several bands. But realizing that the field was too limited, I transferred to New York, hoping to find work. I have already written of meeting my boys and our climb to popularity. I have also mentioned that one of the greatest happinesses came to me at the height of our vaudeville success. During the week we played Flushing in Keith vaudeville, it was my good fortune not only to bring my idol, Rudy Wiedoeft, on the stage to acknowledge public acclaim, but to have a dinner cooked at his home in Flushing by his very capable wife, and to sit for pictures taken of the both of us playing together.

Two years previously, while on a tour for Publix Theatres, he had played Portland, Maine. I had notified my father of his coming; father had met him on his arrival and had seen to it that Wiedoeft had everything he needed for comfort. He was

kind enough to come out to our little home town as soloist for the Kiwanians, something which I doubt his contract permitted him to do, and something which money could not have made him do unless he wished to. My sister had the honor of accompanying him and that clipping is stuck away in my scrap book to remind me of one of the brightest spots in my life.

My little brother met him after his last show the night he soloed in Westbrook, and brought him out again to our home where mother had prepared a big feast. Many of the neighbors came in while Wiedoeft entertained them with the jokes and tricks for which he is also well known. Today Wiedoeft is still the greatest of them all.

He has opened a studio where he accepts only advanced pupils, and how lucky are those who are fortunate enough to be accepted by him! I count myself as one of his first pupils and a letter from him saying that I am, is one of my most prized possessions. He gave it to me shortly after I had returned from London, in gratitude for the work I had done for him there, and I feel so happy in the thought that I have been able in some little way to reflect some of my popularity upon this accomplished saxophonist, who did so much for me.

At this time I received a great deal of inspiration from a book called "The Guarded Heights"—in my

day-dreams I often pictured myself in the role of the hero. However it *was* Wiedoeft who was my greatest inspiration.

It was he who inspired me to work over my saxophone, which in turn helped me to put myself through school and win friends and which eventually brought me the opportunity to lead my own band; and this in turn led to the discovery that my voice was suited to broadcasting and that my ideas on the presentation of simple dance music with song were ready for a warm reception by a public tired of raucous noise and discordant sounds.

CHAPTER XVI

IT'S IN THE WAX

MAKING phonograph records always had a great fascination for me. My first thrill of hearing my voice in song or saxophone in solo came when I was at the University of Maine in 1921.

The authorities of the University of Maine were interested enough in my musical efforts to allow me the use of some of the buildings on the campus for my practice. The agricultural part of the college had a large building known as Agricultural Hall where one learned all the science of the soil and animal life of the farm and barnyard. High up on the fourth floor were large classrooms that were empty at night. In one of these I used to practice certain very disagreeable sounding exercises. For instance, for the development of saxophone tone I started with the lowest note on the sax and held it as long as the deep breath I had just taken would permit. I have held certain notes of the saxophone for two minutes.

Of course nothing could be more monotonous or unpleasant to hear than these long tone exercises since it took me one hour to come up the scale, holding each note as long as possible. Therefore, to

avoid driving others to insanity, I sought complete isolation where I had the comfortable feeling that I was disturbing no one and likewise would not be disturbed.

In some of the various offices on this floor were Ediphones, or dictaphones, as they are more commonly known. Since a letter dictated into one of these could be reproduced for the stenographer's ear, I saw no reason why I could not likewise reproduce music; and so I recorded on these round dictaphone cylinders several simple melodies on the saxophone, announcing them very much in the fashion the old Edison cylinders announced the name of the record.

Although the dictaphone is perfected for the recording of speech in letter form, it is far from perfect when one attempts to record a sustained musical tone on it. The rotation of the wax disc upon which a musical sound has been recorded must be absolutely perfect and the tube, or horn, which leads the sound to the needle that scratches upon the wax disc must be of a certain type and size to catch all of the notes being reproduced. The dictaphone being imperfect in this respect proved to be quite unsatisfactory for perfect reproduction of my musical efforts.

However, it gave me some idea of phrasing, style and tone. I still have several of these old dictaphone cylinders stowed away and prize them very highly,

perhaps as highly as some of our Victor records that today are so popular.

Easter vacation, 1922, saw my first chance to really record a saxophone solo. The Victor Company had written me, in response to my letter inquiring about the possibility of recording a saxophone solo, that they had their saxophone artists and saw no opening for me.

However, the Edison Company, having no great saxophone artist, promised me an audition and a test recording.

The Columbia Phonograph Company maintains what is known as a Personal Record Department which will record, for the sum of fifty dollars, any vocal or instrumental sounds which can be recorded on a ten inch record, that plays for three minutes. This recording is done in the same room that the greatest of their artists use, on the same machines and with the same experts that are devoted to these artists. Then they allow you the choice of one of two proofs, as in the case of proofs of photographs, and the one selected can be purchased singly at one dollar or in lots of 500 at fifty cents each.

It was worth fifty dollars to me (although that seemed a lot of money then), to go to New York and do this. So, I arranged a day during my Easter vacation of 1922 to perform a simple solo. I left

Bangor, Maine, with three great objectives: first, to see and hear Paul Whiteman's orchestra at the Palais Royal, second, to meet Rudy Wiedoeft personally (as his manager had promised me an appointment) and third, to make my first solo record.

As the train stopped in New Haven for a few minutes and I saw those young college boys, dressed in the height of college fashion, I never dreamed that I would some day be on that same station platform, likewise a Yale man, and wearing the same type of clothes.

In New York, I realized every one of my ambitions. It was my first visit to the metropolis and I was duly impressed, as every small town person probably is.

The Palais Royal was at its height in beauty and popularity. Whiteman's band was never better. After introducing myself to one of the finest men in the band,—a young Californian named Don Clark who arranged a great many of Whiteman's wonderful recordings and who was likewise a Wiedoeft protégé and perhaps as great a saxophonist as Wiedoeft himself—I sat among the players and was thrilled as only a country boy listening to the world's greatest band could be.

Clark was very interested when he knew I was going to meet Wiedoeft and we became quite firm friends.

The following day came my appointment with Wiedoeft. His manager, Joe Davis, whom I have mentioned before, had been very friendly in his letters to me and finally did lead me to the greatest saxophonist in the world.

I found Wiedoeft so wonderful that I have told you about him, more in detail, elsewhere.

Two days later I made my first real record. I will never forget how nervous I was as I made the Columbia record of a simple semi-classic called "Japanese Sunset."

After making two "masters" of this tune I went over to the Edison recording laboratories where I was given a test and where they asked me if I could record a very fast technical solo. But I had only been studying the instrument a little over a year and my mastery was far from the brilliant technical solo stage. I knew my limitations and told them that I could only play a simple tonal solo, such as "Mighty Lak' A Rose." They recorded this, and although it was satisfactory tonally it was not the type of solo they wanted, so nothing came of it.

I went back to Maine very happy with the realization of all my dreams.

My first recording with a band came when I substituted for a sick saxophonist in a Boston band then playing in New York. This was back in 1923, when I was playing for Gilda Gray at the Ren-

dezvous with a group of Yale boys. We did a phonograph record for Victor which was not released, but which I heard many times afterwards and which showed me that I had a good recording tone.

That same summer I recorded another solo for another company. I paid them even more than I had paid the Columbia Company, but this record was a fine investment. On the strength of it the English phonograph companies promised me the opportunity of making many records, for which they agreed to pay me very well.

I made my decision to go to London after two years at Yale, and with a wonderful contract in my possession I sailed for London in the fall of 1924.

No sooner had I arrived in London than I found myself in a very fortunate position. The Havana Band with which I was placed and which was composed wholly of Englishmen, was just finishing a contract with Columbia, and was about to enter into a new contract with the Victor Company. Columbia knew that they were losing a fine drawing card and so began recording the Havana Band in a series of old time waltzes which could be released long after the termination of the contract. The Victor Company, on the other hand, wished to be able to release several records as soon as the contract had begun. And so I was kept very busy

during my first few weeks in London, jumping from the Columbia Company to the Victor Company, and getting three times the number of recordings that the Havana Band had formerly been enjoying.

The extra pound ($4.86) I received, along with the pianist and the director, convinced me that my recording work was satisfactory, especially since I had not asked for it. It seemed that my baritone saxophone "took the wax" exceedingly well and it brought me a great deal of extra recording while in England.

I also had the extreme pleasure of accompanying Beatrice Lillie and Gertrude Lawrence in their first English Victor record. And I will never forget how happy I was to ride back to London from the little country town where the English Victor Company was, in a beautiful Rolls-Royce owned by Miss Lillie, who had been kind enough to offer me the lift back. It gave me a great deal of pleasure to meet her again when she came to the Shubert Theatre in New Haven, while I was at Yale.

I returned to Yale in the fall of 1925. During the winter I led four other boys at the Westchester Biltmore Country Club at Rye, the greatest country club in the world. At the end of the winter season of this little orchestra, I interested the boys in making a *personal* Columbia record of "You'll

Love Me Some Day, So Why Not Now?" and several tunes on the opposite side of the record.

The other side of the record was paid for by a man who sold records on campus territory. He ordered a thousand of the records and the Yale students bought them like hot cakes. Many of the boys sent them to their girls at various girls' schools, and even today I get a tremendous thrill when I find that little personal record in various places.

When I returned to Yale for my senior year there had been so many demands for more of this record that the dealer decided to purchase more. The tunes on the other side were now out of date; so on the afternoon preceding the Yale-Princeton game, 1926, I recorded a saxophone solo of "Kiss Me Again." And again the record sold excellently.

I did not record again until the summer of 1927, following my graduation, when I arranged a recording date with the Edison Phonograph Company for the Yale Collegians, with whom I had been in vaudeville for the second time. We made "You'll Love Me Some Day," and another tune, which was released later.

During that summer, however, I received the first inkling that I had a recording voice. A band with which I had once played in Maine several years previous was playing in New York City and I watched them making some Edison records.

They had a vocal trio which did not sound so good on the "play back"; the leader asked me if I wished to try singing. Nothing loath, I consented and I did the finished records with them, receiving nothing for it. That was in September, 1927.

It was the January following that I began at the Heigh-Ho Club with my present group of boys. Soon after we organized we made several tests for a small company, which did not turn out well.

In the summer of 1928, when we played at Rye, the writer of "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby" arranged a test for me with Victor; and even though I was suffering from a severe sore throat and cold, the test was quite satisfactory and I was promised some incidental vocal choruses with some other bands.

The fall found us recording with a small company, a subsidiary of the Columbia Company. These records netted this company a small fortune, in fact, they are still making considerable profits on records we made before we finished recording with them.

The Victor scouts saw our possibilities, and I likewise saw the realization of my dreams in a wonderful Victor contract. They gave me complete freedom of the laboratories, which is something unheard of. They put on a great advertising cam-

paign and our relations with Victor have been most pleasant.

Recording work is interesting. As I feel that the average layman is just as curious about the art of making records as I had been, I will describe the process.

Today all recording is done through the microphone, which is simply an electrical means of conveying the sounds from the instruments, or the vocalist, to the needle which records the sound upon a wax disc. In the old days of horn recording, horns were used to conduct the sound.

We get to the laboratory about nine in the morning and run over the first tune once or twice to get warmed up. When the tune has been sufficiently rehearsed we play it over once into the microphone; then the recording director, by placing a different type of needle on the wax grooves which have just finished catching the sound, plays it right back to us and we listen to the sounds we have just made, very much like a dictaphone recording.

This "play back" enables us to check up on incorrect positions of some of the men, and the length of the record, and indicates places where certain individuals are too strong or too weak.

After making the necessary adjustments, which we check up on by more "play backs," we finally make a "master." With the knowledge that it is

High School Days

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

a "master," everyone becomes all nerved up, since one very bad note spoils the whole piece. However, unless luck is completely unfavorable, four "masters" are made of the tune. These go to the factory, are made into finished records and the best out of the three or four "masters" is the one that reaches the Victor stores.

There is no more tense or disheartening work than making records, because there are times when it seems impossible to make one "master." In England, he who spoilt a "master" twice had to take the whole bunch out to a near-by pub for a drink.

I am very proud of the fact that the Victor Company has faith enough in us to leave us to our own salvation without the usual monitorship of a recording expert. All our records have been our own original ideas. The Victor Company has just renewed our contract for two years. This act, done by their very conservative directors at Camden makes me happy, as it shows their faith in us as a permanent musical attraction and that they believe we are not a fad. Now I have reached the exact opposite stage to that when I *paid* to make records, which today strikes the recording executives as extremely humorous.

CHAPTER XVII

SONGS AND SONG WRITING

I DO NOT want to destroy any illusions that my songs may have built up about me but I am really not, at least in the accepted sense of the word, a "veteran" song writer, although I have more than the required number of songs to my credit to entitle me to make application for membership in the American Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers.

Along Tin Pan Alley the real song writer, in the accepted sense of the word, is he who has not only one or more hits to his credit, but whose mind is continually filled with lyrics and melodies and who can write a song almost at command. Of course it is greater proof of this gift to have five or six or even more successful hits to one's credit; but the man whose mind is prolific enough to produce one song after another that will be at least moderately successful, if not a terrific hit, is the veteran song writer.

Of course the greatest in the game are the men whose names stand out almost like names in history, such as Irving Berlin, with all his successful waltzes and early fox trots, Walter Donaldson,

the Von Tilzers, Victor Herbert, creator of a higher type of semi-classical, popular music, Seymour Brown, Jerome Kern and many others whom I may have forgotten to mention.

Of recent years there has grown up a group of young men who have twisted the music scale into odd combinations to the satisfaction of their purses and vanity. Benny Davis has the most hits to his credit. Gus Kahn is considered the greatest lyric writer of them all—at least he is the highest paid individual, and his name has appeared on so many songs that it is almost impossible to keep count of them. George Gershwin has also written some very clever popular tunes besides his rhapsody, although his popular show tunes have never achieved sensational success. Mabel Wayne, perhaps the only really successful woman writer, has several hits to her credit; while Mary Earl who wrote "Beautiful Ohio" several years ago, seems to have rested on her oars ever since. Marion Gillespie is another not heard from in years.

The clever team of Jimmy McHugh, once a plumber, and Dorothy Fields, daughter of the great comedian, evolved some very fine music for several Broadway productions of the season of 1928-29, including the year's hit, "I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby."

After having written "Dardanella" and left it

on the shelf for two years, Fred Fisher was finally persuaded to allow a famous re-write musician to make a beautiful arrangement of it, thus turning it into a really saleable piece, and its success was instantaneous and historic. But that was his first and last hit.

Nearly everyone in the East knows of the fantastic record of three young boys, one of whom for years had displayed his talents in University productions, while another had been a night club wiseacre and the third who had always been a song writer. These three boys, after collaborating on a few tunes for other publishers finally incorporated and their success is the talk of Tin Pan Alley. Within the period of a year Bud De Sylva, Lou Brown, and Ray Henderson not only wrote enough tunes to pay for the building they now own but declared a handsome dividend for themselves at the end of their first year. Theirs is the outstanding success of the song world, but of course, they are perhaps the most gifted trio of song writers in existence, having to their credit the music of "Good News," "Three Cheers," "Hold Everything," "Follow Through," "Sonny Boy," "Together," and many other tunes too numerous to mention.

Two newcomers, Roy Turk and Fred Alhert, have written three or four successes and can feel very pleased with themselves. Who doesn't know

their "I'll Get By," "Mean to Me," and "I've Got a Feelin' I'm Fallin' "?

I could go on indefinitely.

On the Pacific Coast there are two young men, Herb Brown and Arthur Freed, whose "Broadway Melody" hits, "Doll Dance," "Pagan Love Song," "Singin' in the Rain" and many other tunes of an instrumental nature have earned them a princely fortune, enough so they can retire at any time.

Other famous west coast and middlewest writers are Byron Gay whose "The Vamp," "Sand-dunes," and "Horses" were very popular; Isham Jones whose work with Gus Kahn gave us such beautiful tunes as "I'll See You in My Dreams," "Spain," "The One I Love Belongs to Somebody Else," "It Had to Be You," and many others.

But I must end my list here even at the risk of injuring the feelings of those whom I have not mentioned. I feel the ones enumerated are the outstanding writers, and anyone I may have failed to speak of will forgive me.

Most of these songsmiths are at the time of my writing either on the Pacific Coast, or en route to it or from it, as the creation of sound pictures and the need for music to fit situations in these sound pictures has required the presence of these fertile musical minds. They must be on the spot where, as the picture is rehearsed, they can see more easily

just how the song must fit the scene. At unheard of guaranteed weekly salaries, with their royalties from each song sheet and record as an extra bonus, these men have rushed to the Coast with even greater anticipation and hope than did the miners in the gold rush of '49.

In fact, almost over night the town of Hollywood became transformed into the Tin Pan Alley of Broadway, and the hotels and merchants of the film centre are very grateful to sound pictures for this influx.

Some of the writers have produced some beautiful, simple tunes that have tremendously enhanced the value of the pictures for which they were written and have given our younger generation something to sing, whistle and dance to.

Of course I realize that those professionals and amateurs who have written one or two songs that have been fairly successful, or even hits, and then have ceased to write more will consider themselves just as much dyed-in-the-wool song writers as many of the others I have named. But I firmly believe that in the jargon of Tin Pan Alley the real song writer is he or she who continues year after year with a steady output of songs that are at least fairly successful.

The fact is, by one phrase of my own definition, I rule myself out of this coveted category. It is a

disillusioning thing for me to say that my mind is not constantly over-run with melodies and lyrics. Rather is my mind usually occupied with problems of an every day nature. Spontaneously, I can produce any number of simple melodies that would probably be fairly popular, but I cannot claim for myself a talent like Bud De Sylva's, Walter Donaldson's or Jerome Kern's. I know that the beautiful melodies and lyrics for which these men are responsible were not the result of piecework and unusual effort on their part, but rather came naturally within their horizons of consciousness, and stayed there until these writers saw fit to put them down.

Just what I might be able to do in the way of original composition of songs I do not fully know, because I have never sat down quietly in a spot calculated to inspire me. In the classroom at college either I wrote original themes or none at all. I have never been satisfied with any of my efforts that were similar to the work of many others, and I always cast about for an original line of attack before I began a theme.

Some day I may do as Victor Herbert did, secure a soundproof room or an isolated place in the country with nothing to disturb me and see if I can create something very original in song. I have conceived an idea which will aid me greatly in deciding on the quality of what I will try to write, and with

this idea I hope to compose something really very unusual.

The songs that so far bear my name were generally a collaboration between another and myself. One of the songs that I am most popularly identified with has quite a unique history, so I will speak of it separately and in detail.

I am most popularly associated with "Vagabond Lover," one of my early compositions, due to the fact that it became a country-wide hit, and was ideally suited to me in every way. Yet I feel that "Deep Night" was one of my best efforts, if not the best of all.

Following my graduation from college I played with the Yale Collegians in vaudeville for the summer, and fall found me in Boston leading a local orchestra there.

Our pianist was one of the greatest I have ever played with, a young Harvard boy who was in his senior year at college. He was a wonderful player and he knew that I esteemed his work very highly.

Then I left Boston and came to New York and after clubbing around I began at the Heigh-Ho Club with my present band. During Easter vacation in March, 1928, this boy, Charles Henderson by name, came to New York for a short visit. He called on me at the Heigh-Ho Club and accepted my invitation to sit in and play a few numbers with us.

I asked him to play several piano choruses featuring himself.

After playing several tunes of the day he began a composition that made us all sit up and look at one another. I asked him what it was. He replied that it was merely something he had thought of recently. I thought it was beautiful and featured it the rest of the evening, keeping him at the piano. After a few repetitions we picked the melody up and played it with him.

Henderson wrote out a few parts of the piece and went back to Boston. We called the tune "Slavia," for want of a better name since the nature of the piece suggested something Oriental, something Slavic, sombre and mystic.

We continued playing it through spring and summer until fall when we returned to the Heigh-Ho Club.

One night I felt the inspiration to write some words to fit the melody. As I considered the melody of the piece I realized there were several points with high notes that were fairly difficult for me to reach. The syllables containing double "e" on high notes make it easy for me to reach these notes and considering the piece was of such a mystic, dark nature, like night, the idea occurred to me to call it "Deep Night," as the word "deep" would come in in every case on these high notes.

My mental picture was one of two lovers in the depths of a garden or a lover's lane, or even woods, at night. The question that next occurred to me was, what could I say about the time and the place? I was handicapped by the fact that in the dark there would naturally be little to see or hear, there was very little material for descriptive lines.

One of the psychological factors in a successful song is that it should deal with a great amount of "you" and "me"; all of us love to see the words "you" and "I", because then the song holds a personal interest for us. I began:

"Deep night, stars in the sky above—"

This might seem a bit illogical due to the fact that the sky was supposed to be entirely dark and deep, but here I took an author's license, as I did in the next line,

"Moonlight, lighting our place of love."

Then the rustic sound that would be quite in keeping with this setting,

"Night winds seem to have gone to rest—"

Followed, as he looked at her,

"Two eyes brightly with love are gleaming."

And then the words I thought would come from the lips of the lover, or even of the girl,

"Come to my arms, my darling, my sweetheart, my own;
Vow that you'll love me always and be mine alone."

And back to the description that gives me the greatest feeling of satisfaction.

"Deep night, whispering trees above,
Kind night, bringing you nearer, dearer and dearer,
Deep night, deep in the arms of love."

I began singing the song almost immediately, we had played the melody as a regular fox trot but it took several nights before we realized that it must be played quite slowly in order to get these lyrics easily in. I started giving it quite a play over the radio, putting it in practically every program.

I worked on this theory: if an unpublished song held any merit, by featuring it continuously over the air I would be able to bring attention to it, especially as the publishers or their scouts listen in to all radio programs to note the absence of their own tunes as well as the inclusion of new and odd tunes. In this assumption I have found I am quite right.

There sprang up quite a demand for "Deep Night," so much so that several big publishers called me up about it.

Of course what may seem to be an unusual de-

mand for a new tune may really be quite exaggerated since a most peculiar thing takes place when a tune is liked over the radio. The individual who likes it may go to one of the local music stores and ask for the tune there. Supposing the tune to be unpublished, or in the process of printing, the store will not have it. The individual then usually goes to the remainder of the music stores in the town or city, receiving the same reply at each store. Let us assume that five stores are visited. All five will call up their jobber, who will probably be in all five cases the same man; the jobber will receive five orders for that tune and it will appear that five different people wanted it, when in reality only one person has asked for it.

Therefore, when a jobber reports an unusual demand for a song I do not allow it to influence me too much, unless it is quite obvious that the demand is very, very great. In this case the demand seemed to be fairly genuine, and the publishers very much in earnest.

I wrote Henderson to send me the verse melody which he had not given us the first time. A few nights after it came some boys from the South visited me and asked for some form of manuscript of the tune to take back with them; so while my band was playing I sat down and wrote out my first verse.

This was considerably more difficult than the chorus, inasmuch as I felt I had to get something that would lead up properly to the thought of the chorus. Naturally I thought of twilight and began,

"Shadows are falling,
And night is falling,
This is the time for love.
Day has just ended,
The moon has descended,
Lighting the sky above.
Day seemed so long, dear,
Waiting for you;
Moments seemed years to me;
Daylight has lost you,
And night time has brought you.
Would it could always be—"

Several days after this Henderson himself came to New York and I accepted a tea dance job at the Lombardy Hotel, simply to keep him with me as I admired his work so much; thus I lengthened my working day from eleven to thirteen hours, but I enjoyed playing with Henderson a great deal.

He seemed to feel that the show tunes which Fields, Rogers and Hart were writing were just what the public wanted. He liked the simplicity of the lyrics of "My Heart Stood Still," and suggested to me that I should re-write the lyrics of "Deep Night" to make them more "matter of fact," like the lyrics of "My Heart Stood Still;" that is, some-

thing to the effect: "I took a walk and sat down, I stood up and walked some more"—lyrics that were very occidental, very modern and unaffected. But he did not seem to realize that he had created a melody that "matter of fact" lyrics would not suit. Rather was there a depth and a sombreness to the melody that required lyrics of that nature.

He may not have seen my point then, but today I think he realizes that the lyrics I fitted to his melody were most suitable and appropriate.

I featured "Deep Night" as never before and finally we began the rounds of the publishers who were interested in the number. We found ourselves in the unique position of having a song that was greatly desired. Whereas the average amateur song writer, as we both unquestionably were, never gets any further than a stereotyped refusal from some office boy, we were, on the contrary, conducted to the private sanctum of the head of the firm himself where we sang the song for him.

The three big firms we visited all offered varying inducements to leave the song with them. One man who had seen no merit in the melody of the song the previous spring and who, a month before, had turned down both "Deep Night" and "Vagabond Lover," now offered one cent more per sheet copy than any other publisher; but he antagonized Hen-

derson by feigning indifference when he really greatly desired the tune.

Our decision to leave it with the publisher who received it was influenced by what we term the mechanical end of the tune. There are tunes that sell because they are easily playable and also pleasant to listen to, but "Deep Night" is not one of these; rather it is a difficult tune to *play,* though a most agreeable one to sit and listen to *while someone else plays it.* The mechanical side of the question concerns the number of ways each phonograph company records the tune, and how many piano rolls are recorded of it along with rolls for hurdy-gurdies, musical boxes and all other mechanical means of production. For each record or roll the recording company must send to the publisher two cents which are divided between the publisher and the writer.

This sum may sound insignificant, but when we reflect that some tunes are recorded on over ten million records and rolls, the resulting sum of $200,000, which is absolutely exclusive of the royalties on the sheet copies, is tremendous.

"Ramona," for instance, was recorded nine different ways on Victor records, that is, three or four vocalists sang it, each on his or her own Victor record; it was recorded by an organ, and three or

four orchestras also made their own records of the tune. One of these nine ways, by a prominent vocal artist, reached a sale of 1,500,000 records. Each of the phonograph companies recorded it at least four ways and when one considers the score or more of phonograph companies, large and small, with foreign record royalties, the returns from the mechanical end of the song were staggering. The song netted the two writers about $75,000 each.

Obviously, the publisher who keeps in close and friendly contact with the recording directors is the one who is best assured of having his tunes recorded in the greatest number of ways. The firm with whom we left "Deep Night" stood in very well with the record men.

Realizing that "Deep Night" was a tune to be listened to and not played, due to its difficult key signature and minor vein, we felt we had done the wisest thing; and in view of its many recordings on all of the records today we know that our choice was a wise one.

I wrote the second verse when the printer was ready to go to press, and I feel that my lyrics of "Deep Night" adequately express this song.

I guess you can imagine the wonderful feeling it gave me when I stepped into the magnificent Roxy Theatre in New York City during one of their lavish stage presentations and heard one of their

great tenors render the song, verse and chorus, and saw the ballet dance to the strains of it. And now I add to that thrill my pleasure at hearing the records by various artists including that gorgeous ensemble, the Victor Salon orchestra.

These give me a permanent satisfaction that I will enjoy, I hope, later on when I am no longer in the fray.

I have every record of "Deep Night" recorded in the different ways that each phonograph company had it made and I shall receive a great deal of happiness when I listen to these in later life.

I receive hundreds of manuscripts by mail in the course of a week. We do not solicit these and I do not really welcome them because I have found that the average amateur writes what might be classed as just a fair song, a song with a melody that is acceptable but usually trite; by that I mean that there is no novel or unusual twist in the sequences of melody. Rather is it so plain that it fails to attract or hold the attention, which is the function of the melody in any song. As for lyrics, the words that most amateurs suggest for songs are entirely unsuited to the melodies; the meters are absolutely illogical and always too flowery and poetic. A successful lyric should, like the melody, suggest an unusual thought, not necessarily elaborate or deep, but one that fits the melody, arrests

the attention, and either pleases the humor, or, perhaps, has a tender meaning calculated to plunge the listener for the moment into a well of retrospection over some unhappy love affair.

"Vagabond Lover" is a good example of a simple melody and a simple thought, but the lyric has two or three lines that make one stop and think. The lines

> "Some girls are quickly forgotten
> And gone with the dawn of the day,
> And some you remember
> Like last glowing embers,"

are to my mind the heart of the entire piece. In them a philosophy is tenderly expressed, and the thought of "last glowing embers" brings an attractive vision of a fireplace and a man sitting before it and seeing in its flames the faces of the girls he has known. Unquestionably it is just the suggestion one derives from those lines that made the song, together with its easily singable melody, the most popular song in the entire country during the summer of 1929.

"If I Had A Talking Picture of You" is an example of a humorous song that has an entirely different appeal. In fact, the three boys who wrote this song are noted for the originality of the thoughts expressed in their songs.

It is very risky for anyone in my position to have very much to do with manuscripts from unknown persons. Most publishers are considered heartless by amateurs because they will not accept or consider their manuscripts, but these publishers have learned from bitter experience that these unknown composers sometimes submit manuscripts which they did not write themselves, and such deceptions have caused very costly legal entanglements.

It is so difficult to prove, in the case of amateurs, the true authorship of the song, that I have adopted the policy of publishers and steadfastly refuse to consider manuscripts from anyone but a professional song writer. I realize that I may be, once in a hundred cases, losing a really good song, because once in a while an amateur hits on both an unusual melody and a unique lyric, but not very often. Publishers have their own staffs of song writers who turn out more songs than the publishers need and as it is, the few minutes I have between shows are practically always taken up listening to these professional writers and their latest efforts.

Since the coming of the talking picture and songs for the picture, where there were ten new songs on the counter each month, today there are fifty or even a hundred, and the song that becomes a hit or even reaches a fair sale, must be an unusual

song indeed. That is why good songs are really commercially worthless today. The song must be *outstanding* and very unusual in order to pay the publisher a profit.

It has been my pleasure to transcribe several old tunes and to see them reach a peak of popularity. By transcribing I mean taking a song which has been a failure in one tempo, revising it in spots, and putting it into a more suitable tempo, thus making it twice as acceptable. I did this in the case of "If You Were the Only Girl In the World," which floundered around for twelve years as a fox trot, getting nowhere until I adapted it to waltz tempo. As a waltz it achieved a great success in our picture.

Likewise I have revised "I Love the Moon," a beautiful English tune with a very pathetic idea, written by a young man who knew that he was dying and who, in the song, tells of all the things he loves that he knows he has to leave behind him.

In "Me Queres" I tried my hand at translation, and translated the Spanish lyric into English, using my training in the Spanish Department at Yale to good advantage.

And in many a song that I have sung on the air I have delighted in making possible a version for men where before there was only a woman's ver-

sion, of the song, as in the case of "Can't We Be Friends."

And sometimes a change in a word here and a note there has made all the difference in the world. "A Little Kiss Each Morning" originally ended "A little kiss each morning, A little kiss *at* night." To me "at" was repugnant and I repeated "each" for the last line and made it "A little kiss each morning, A little kiss each night."

"Then I'll Be Reminded Of You" was originally "*And* I'll Be Reminded Of You." To me the "then" was absolutely necessary for the sake of cause and effect, because the lines

> "I'll gather some June dreams,
> I'll search for some moonbeams"

lead up to the point where the one who does these things, says he will be reminded of his sweetheart, and I think that if you consider the thought of the two phrases you will find that "Then I'll be reminded of you" follows much more logically.

It has been my great delight to bring to light songs which have been forgotten for years and to make them popular with a large audience when they had been sung in one section or locality of the country as a sort of folk song. Such a case was the song "I Love You, I Love You, I Love You,

Sweetheart Of All My Dreams," which was over five years old and which had been purely localized in Boston, and never attracted public attention until we first broadcast it from the Heigh-Ho Club.

Two tremendously successful examples of such revivals by publishers were "Ah, Sweet Mystery Of Life," which was written for a Victor Herbert musical comedy many years ago and which made a fortune when revived by Witmark, the publisher, and the organ solo by Lemare. The latter, which was originally called "Andantino," was put out as a popular song with the title of "Moonlight and Roses," and made a tremendous fortune. In this case Lemare had no legal right to claim royalties as he had not copyrighted the melody in America, but in this case the publisher believed that justice should be done, and voluntarily gave Lemare more than he could possibly have received had the song been copyrighted.

I hope that I have, in the foregoing, indicated some of the fascination that song writing and publishing holds. It is a heart-breaking business at best and many of those in it would like nothing better than to get out of it, but like the stage, it holds a lure of romance and intrigue that is very hard to get away from.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SONG PLUGGER

DUE to the influx of theme songs and sound pictures a most interesting species of human being is fast disappearing from the musical world. I refer to the song plugger.

He is an individual with perhaps one of the most thankless jobs that anyone could have and a task that requires more cajolery, diplomacy and salesmanship combined with the ability to take more rebuffs than the proverbial insurance and book agent. From early morning until late at night his hours are spent among artists who might be the means of presenting one or more of his songs to the public.

The history of the success of a song is more complicated than that of a best seller in fiction. A successful song writer must be a keener psychologist, possibly, than any other artist.

In the first place there is the period to be considered. There are Mammy periods, Oriental song periods with subdivisions when Chinese, Japanese and Hindu songs are especially popular; Hawaiian periods; Dixie periods, closely allied to the Mammy periods; periods when the public seems ready for "nut" songs with the lyrics about Fords, bananas,

ice cream, and so forth. But the public is always ready for a love song, especially a love song in waltz tempo.

Assuming that the song writer has written the correct song for the period, the next problem is to introduce it to a public spread not only over forty-eight states but over the entire world.

In the old days this tremendous task was accomplished first by vaudeville acts and traveling singers. Later, phonograph records became, with vaudeville, a successful medium. Today the radio as a means of introducing songs to the public is a thousand times more effective than either of these other two, considering that at some radio broadcasts the listening audience may number five or even ten million people. Nowadays a good song can almost be "made" by one or two broadcasts over the giant networks from coast to coast.

Once the song has become successful in America, it is purchased by foreign agents or individual publishers who in turn exploit it by radio and records. The triple hook-up of radio, records and vaudeville is responsible for the tremendous royalties paid to song writers today.

An outstanding example of this is "Sonny Boy" which in a period of a month and a half reached a sale, thanks to Al Jolson's motion picture, of over one million sheet copies and several millions of

records, which nets both the composers and the publishers a pretty penny indeed.

Thus it will be seen that the vaudeville song plugger, or publisher's representative, who tries to persuade the acts to use his particular tunes in their routine, is practically unnecessary, as is the man whose business it was to take the recording heads out to luncheon and plead with these experts to record his tunes. Today if the orchestra leader can be persuaded to broadcast the tune to his audience of millions, it will, on its own merit go over in the various music stores, whereas the record companies are only too anxious to record the tunes for which there is a great sheet music demand.

Again, most of the vaudevillians have radios and hear for themselves just how wonderful a tune is, or get the effect of a broadcasting of this particular tune.

Then again, the motion sound picture with a reiteration of its theme song reaches almost as many as the radio, since there may be simultaneous showings of the same picture in almost every good sized city throughout the country for weeks.

The song plugger formerly included in his routine visits to the vaudeville artists' dressing-rooms and the dance hall, where he attempted to persuade the orchestra leader to feature his tune. Often he himself would sing it while he stayed there. When

you heard a strange singer at a dance you could be pretty sure that he was probably a song plugger.

But the dance hall public is only a tiny part of the tremendous number reached by one hour's radio broadcast; and today these same song pluggers are instructed to train their guns on the radio orchestra director and not to return without a promise from this director to play one or more of the firm's tunes on a particular broadcast.

Thus it is not unusual for me to find ten or even more individuals, who represent music publishers, waiting for me at my club on broadcasting nights to ask me to broadcast some particular tune.

At the time I write this, surprising as it may seem, the Connecticut Yankees are considered one of the ace broadcasting bets on the air, and it is laughable at times the ways and means whereby these song pluggers seek to gain their point. There are the blunt individuals who come directly to the point and ask me to play such-and-such a tune, without giving any reason why I should play it. Then there's the opposite type who avoids the subject entirely and talks of anything but "shop," hoping that the mere sight of him and his refusal to talk "shop," combined with the pleasantries he does exchange, will prevail upon me to feature one of his songs.

There is a still deadlier species yet to come. This

is the type who spends hours trying to convince me of the merits of a tune that I have probably never even heard and would not care for if I did.

They have stock expressions which they all use. I take a great delight in confounding them with their own expressions which I have humorously labeled "song plugger's expression number one-two," and so on.

Here are some of their best ones:

"The song is beginning to show up."

"Everyone who has heard it predicts it as a hit!"

"With you on it, the song can't miss."

"Every big leader has recorded it but you."

And since my rise to stardom and the general belief that there is a special type of Rudy Vallée song, one of their pet expressions has been "It's a typical Rudy Vallée song," or when the composer himself is talking to me, "I wrote it just for you."

Realizing that I am no better than the songs I have to sing, that these songs are my means of expression, my tools, my instruments, I try to see personally every song plugger who wishes to see me, even though I may be ready to drop in my tracks from exhaustion. I never know when I might be turning down a tune that fits me.

Although it is considered something to be whispered about, something almost unethical, I must mention the practice of being "cut in on" a song.

There is really no reason why the subject should be kept in the dark as though it were a disgrace, because the orchestra leader who is responsible for making a song into a hit has a right to expect a recompense.

There is, however, the unreasonable jealousy of other orchestra leaders who believe that they too should be "cut in on" songs, forgetting that their support of a song may mean little or nothing to the public.

It is a peculiar thing that we have, single-handed, popularized many songs for which we have received little or nothing. I have never asked for a cut and have refused to be "cut in on" many songs when I had no faith in them or felt, in the case of songs not suited to me, that my support of them would mean very little to their chances of becoming hits.

I know orchestra leaders who are "in on" as many as twenty songs; some of the songs will net them thousands, others will bring them nothing, even though the expenditure of effort on each may have been the same.

When I signed my contract with Victor, I became doubly attractive as a means of helping a tune to stardom since Victor records enjoy a tremendous sale.

But after all, as time has proved, no amount of plugging, broadcasting or recording can make a

bad tune a hit, and no one can absolutely predict what tunes will be hits and what tunes will not be hits. The man who could would be worth a fortune to any publisher.

I have been fairly successful in predicting and starting hits, but I have been so completely aghast at the way some tunes have turned out that I fear to predict with any degree of certainty just whether a tune will click or not. The public that buys sheet copies of songs has a taste that is as variable as the weather and, although I have several tests which help me in feeling the public pulse, I find that we are all amateurs in song prophecy.

Some of the song pluggers are my dearest friends, in fact I welcome most of them, though there are times when I wish they would leave me alone. Of course their presence is usually mutually beneficial to me and the firm they represent. But there are times when to all of us our rest and sleep are worth thousands of dollars; and in their loyalty to their respective firms these enthusiasts are so insistent that it is sometimes very hard to listen to them.

These men have so affected me that my radio program building has become a task I dread since they have made me feel that unless I take care of them all they will suffer; indeed some of them have lost their positions through their failure to secure promises from orchestra leaders to play their re-

spective tunes. So whenever possible I try to give them a "break."

However, I will welcome the day when the song plugger has ceased to be and the publishing companies adopt letters or test records as advance agents and reminders to the orchestra director to feature their tunes.

CHAPTER XIX

THIS DREAM GIRL NONSENSE

THEY say the man who dug the word halitosis out of the dictionary will probably be given a gold statue in the public square by the Listerine people, but the publicity man who seized upon that phrase, "girl of my vagabond dreams" from the song "Vagabond Lover," and tied me up with a search for a dream girl merits a royal hanging for making me appear an individual in a never ending search for the perfect girl.

One ghost-written article entitled, "Wanted, the Girl of My Dreams," did convey some of my ideas, but at best they were quite garbled—one part in particular that said I probably would not dare to meet any girl in her home and go to dinner because I feared that she would be ill at ease, feeling that she was with a musical celebrity. This resulted in hundreds of letters inviting me to home cooked meals and assuring me that the authors only wanted me for myself. I appreciate the sentiments of those who wrote me offering meals, and I wish I could have taken advantage of them, as I like nothing better than good, home cooking.

Then there was another article that again garbled

my ideas, but throughout all this I have always felt that the reaction of the public would be, "Who cares what his ideas of a perfect girl are?" and that this reaction would be perfectly justified. After all, why should anyone be interested in my idea of the girl who would make me happy? Yet those who wrote the articles talked me into believing that the public at large would be interested and for that reason I permitted the appearance of these two specific articles. I know that I am far from perfect and that is the reason that I do not expect a perfect mate. I have certain ideals and hopes but I am not hypercritical or too hard to satisfy. I do hope to find a girl whose ideas and views in the majority of cases are similar to mine, because it is my belief that only people suited to each other can be happy. It is illogical to expect that two people with conflicting temperaments and ideas can live happily in the same house unless one or the other is always willing to make a concession and give in.

While a brunette does quicken my heart more than a blonde, yet I have cared deeply for several blondes and still enjoy their company greatly. A woman's physical charm is the thing that first attracts me, but unless she has many other wonderful qualities that my mother has, I am afraid we could never be happy. I love an industrious woman, one who enjoys housework, taking care of a thousand

and one household things, and likes to cook. I hope to be able to save her from drudgery but if it should become necessary for her to do these things I would want to feel that she loved me enough to accept whatever her lot might have become. That phrase in the wedding ceremony expresses it best of all, "For better or for worse." I would like to feel that were every misfortune conceivable to come upon me, the girl I loved would still stay by me and would be loyal through whatever calamity befell me.

That, I believe, is the real thing. In fact, my conception of love is an indefinable something that cannot be measured, estimated or analyzed. The minute you are able to point out in concrete, physical terms the thing that attracts you to a person, then I say it is not that indefinable something we call love, because if it is something tangible that can be described or named, then the minute it is lost, love ceases; but real love continues long after beauty disappears, when disfigurement or even dismemberment occurs. Love continues under the most horrible conditions and the one who loves will never be able to explain really why.

I do expect and want it to be natural that the girl who says she loves me should keep a certain warmth and sweetness for me alone. The woman who gushes and throws herself with abandon into

the arms of any man she dances with, disproves for me the statement that she loves me. There is a difference between courtesy and discourtesy, and I expect her to show other people courtesy at all times but not that extreme warmth that should be mine alone.

I have been rather fickle all of my life and the remarkable thing that surprises those who know me is that in spite of the fact that I do not look romantic I have probably paid attention and given time to more girls than many dark-haired sheiks who look the perfect Romeo. In fact, my greatest happiness is the companionship of someone I care for, and I think that is what we are all striving for in spite of the fact that we generally conceive other goals to be our aim. If one considers the search for happiness down to the ultimate analysis, happiness will probably be found in the companionship of someone to care for and to do for and to be loved by. It was soon pointed out to me that certain men had become jealous of me because of my effect upon their wives and sweethearts over the radio. I refused to believe this because it was too absurd. However, if there ever was any truth in the statement, I have always wished that the jealous men would bring the young ladies to see me, as I am sure that they would be quite disillusioned and once more return to normal and be quite cured of their love for a

radio Romeo. It may be possible that the romantic songs that I enjoy singing do fill a want for romance in the hearts and minds of some girls, but it is really the songs and my rendition of them that accomplishes this. After all, Buddy Rogers does more damage to female hearts in one embrace with his heroine than I do in twenty broadcasts.

CHAPTER XX

"THAT'S MY WEAKNESS NOW"

I WAS born with an extraordinary amount of feeling. By feeling I mean something that has many sides and may be expressed in many ways. A person who has this intensity of emotion within, may find an outlet for it through passion and anger, or through artistic work such as painting, sculpture and writing, whether literary or musical. Some of its greatest mediums of expression are instruments of a musical nature, including that most beautiful of all instruments, the human voice. The majority of human beings rarely experience *great* passion or feelings. If I explain what I mean by "great passion or feelings," I think it will be seen that I am quite correct.

In speaking of that passion or feeling known as anger or temper, I have found that nearly everyone seems to take a certain foolish pride in saying that they have quite a temper when once aroused. And yet, I find these people unusually docile, easy to get along with, and very tractable. It is true that, sufficiently aroused, they *are* provoked to anger. But in my mind, the person who really has a temper is one who, on the slightest provocation, or on no

provocation at all, flies into an ungovernable rage. In the same spontaneous way does this same feeling or passion manifest itself through music and the sex impulse.

I know so many musicians who play well, who play mechanically correctly, *and with a certain amount of feeling withal.* That is, the listener is aware of the fact that there is *some* emotion expressed in this person's tone, whether through an instrument or the voice. But the *degree* of feeling in the majority of musicians is very small, simply due to the fact that the majority of persons are not *tremendously* emotional by nature. So it is obviously quite impossible for them to express something they do not feel through their voices or instruments. The actor or orator who can sway his audience is merely using his voice and mind as a medium for the expression of this elusive feeling. I do not claim to know from what part of the body this phenomenon comes; I do know that it manifests itself differently in different people. I experience it very often through music. Martial tones give me that very commonplace run of shivers up and down my spine. Sad music, or extremely beautiful music combined with beautiful poetry, brings tears very easily to my eyes, beautiful music with a love story or a love picture brings an emptiness, a yearning, and an ache into my heart. All my life

I have always felt these emotions when I have been confronted by these expressions of the emotions of others. Thus it is that certain people have within them a well of emotion and passion or a certain quality of personality. We call that personality "IT" or sex appeal. A person of this temperament reacts upon one whose system is likewise constructed, in such a way that each is tremendously aware of the other's feelings. Ever since I was a child I have been aware of the tremendous attraction that certain types of people who are generally alike in type have for me.

Clearly everyone has a weakness for something. By that I do not mean a weakness that becomes an obsession that ends with the person going to an asylum, or, in the case of a drunkard or gambler, "to the dogs." Rather is this weakness a sort of a cross between a hobby and a complex. For some men the week is not complete and they have not had their greatest happiness unless they have attended some kind of a sport event; for another man it is a business convention; for another it is something in the nature of a gathering of old cronies either at cards, pool, or a fishing trip; and for still others it is a drinking bout, or a gambling fest, or a smoker. While I enjoy some of these things, I find none of them absolutely essential to my happiness. We have among our great paintings a simple one that is

called "End of Day" which depicts a farmer going home with the setting sun. I remember the painting only vaguely but I do know that the idea it conveyed to me was that the reward which awaited this farmer was his cottage, with all its homely comforts, his children, and lastly that complement that must have been created as a necessary half of the total, his wife.

Likewise to me, the reward for all my strivings, schemings, labors and hopes, is the comfort that I will receive from the company of the girl who brings happiness to me. Perhaps it will be just her company, just her presence by my side; maybe it will be the pressure of her hand, or the feel of her in my arms as we dance, or if alone, in embrace; and then that acme of all happiness and delight, the touch of her lips, that gives me this joy. I know that the majority of men are not so dependent on the companionship of women as I am and are perhaps happier for their independence, as I have often been very lonely.

I suppose my classmates at Yale often wondered why, on the few nights that I did not play, I did not loll on the campus, gossip on the fence, or go down to the theatre with a crowd of them. They could not put themselves in my place. If they had, they would have understood why, on the nights when I was not out playing my saxophone to earn

the wherewithal to remain in college, I would go to Hartford, New York, or even further, for the company of some girl. Consider that all day in the classrooms and on the campus I was associated with men, men and more men. In the evening when I played I was still among men. During the long hours of travel to the places at which we played, which were usually two or three hours distant from New Haven, I was with men; and as I sat among the men in the band, I had to watch other men with beautiful women in their arms, dancing to our music. I had to sit there and see beautiful women returning the ardor of the men with whom they were dancing, nestling close with eyes closed, cheek to cheek, wrapped in bliss and happiness, waltzing to the strains of our music; women with beautiful forms, in beautiful gowns well calculated to show these forms to the best advantage; women whose lips, artificially colored, stood out like vivid wounds or like tremulous petals, moist, warm and full of life, inviting the lips of the man whom they found appealing.

I had been perfectly happy at the University of Maine where the co-eds were attractive but not so alluring as the girls that Yale men had down to their fraternity dances. At Maine my saxophone had given me, even in my first year, a bit of popularity so that the fellows were anxious to have me dance

with the girls they brought to the dances. There was no drinking at Maine; very few, if any, girls smoked. The whole atmosphere was one of simplicity. Yet everyone was happy. "Cutting in" was unknown, and the boy who possessed a fur coat or even a medium priced car, was to be envied indeed.

To be suddenly transplanted to a college in which were enrolled boys accustomed to having everything they wanted, and to see the beautiful women whom they brought to the dances was a very disturbing experience. I was never so miserable as at the first Yale fraternity dance at which I played. I did not expect prominence, I knew that I might go through Yale and never experience the admiration for my musical ability that I had known at the University of Maine, but the contrast was too great and I have never been so unhappy as that first night that I sat in the background and played from ten o'clock in the evening until five in the morning with almost no stop, while good-looking, well-groomed and well-dressed young men, feeling very gay, danced by me holding in their arms the most beautiful creatures that my eyes had ever seen; and when we went outside for a breath of air, I had to watch them walking arm in arm under the lantern lights, or sitting and driving in the beautiful specially built foreign cars that these boys owned. I had no right to be envious and unhappy, or to

expect anything else but what was my lot, but after all I had tasted of the spotlight, and had been a big frog in a small puddle. I was young and human, intensely so; I was trying to play music that had feeling, passion, and it was so hard to feel that I was always destined to have to play for the other fellow. I do not think that any of the men in the orchestra with whom I played knew that I was so unhappy. Neither did I try to forget or drown my gloom with the refreshments that were served to us every two hours, which to the men were necessary stimulants to help them weather the long hard stretches of continuous playing.

I have always had a fierce pride in my musical work; I have always liked to feel that I could give my best *cold sober*, and it was almost extraordinary in the eyes of the men for whom I played while at Yale that I was just as ready and eager to play the last hour in the morning as I was when we began in the early evening. I have known certain musicians who could only give their best when properly "ginned up." I am so thankful that in my own case I can give my very best with no alcoholic "shot in the arm."

Therefore it was no wonder that when I did get a night off I did not stay in and study, do extra reading or go to a lecture that might be presented by some visiting celebrity, much as I wanted to do

these things (for I always loved to study, never failed a course and kept my studies high). But I felt the absolute need of the company and companionship of someone of the opposite sex, since morning, noon and night I was under the strain of work always among men. Girls are comparatively scarce in New Haven, and those that are attractive are at a premium. Reflect that each New Haven girl of the type and age that a young collegian would like to know was sought for and could make her choice from three thousand boys, most of whom were the pick of the land! The high school girls had their own sweethearts with whom they had grown up, and of course the natives of New Haven, or of any college town, are somewhat suspicious and loath to allow their daughters to go out with college men who, though they may tarry in that town for four years are somewhat comparable in their way to traveling salesmen; and I think that most girls in college towns have the feeling that they will be forgotten when the boys graduate, and left with the stigma of a college widow, that is, a girl who goes on year after year going out with the most popular boys in the college but never receives an offer of marriage from any of them, and only loses the chance of finding a real husband among the boys she has known all her life. The most attractive daughters of the élite in the college towns are

themselves usually away at college, or finishing school, or are abroad.

I was extremely fortunate in meeting the two men with whom I played several nights before Yale opened. These two men, Yale graduates themselves still living in New Haven, practicing their professional occupations by day and playing by night, introduced me to people in the city that otherwise I probably never would have been fortunate enough to meet in my whole four years there. But even at that I found that most of the eligible girls in New Haven were spoken for, and as time went on I met girls in New York, Hartford, and various other places, and though I could ill afford it, both financially and from a standpoint of health, I went to see these girls with my eyes aching from lack of sleep; that I might have the pleasure of an evening which, for me, amply rewarded all my efforts.

There are those who tell me that I have an attractive personality. That may or may not be, but it has often been my ironic fate to see women who I knew were trying to find a man who could give them affection and warmth, and say sweet things, but who looked at me and failed to see promise of any of these things in my physical exterior. It is nothing unusual for girls dancing by the band stand to ask me "*When will Mr. Vallée be here?*" never

dreaming for a moment that mine might be the voice that seemed so romantic and tender to them. In fact in meeting most of the girls whom I have ever known, I was the aggressor. That is, they might have seen me dozens of times but never had any desire to know me. I usually asked for the introduction, and had to awaken an interest in these women. In other words I have no illusions about myself, and for a time I dreaded personal appearances both on the stage and in the movies, since I realized that there was nothing intriguing or magnetic in my looks. However, I did realize that make-up could do a great deal for me and that a personality, if I had one, could make itself felt both on the stage and on the screen.

You will say that it is man's place to ask for the introduction but I cite the following example to show what women will do if sufficiently intrigued by a handsome man. At the University of Maine, I knew the wonderful love and companionship of a chum, the only one I had ever had in my life. We were fraternity brothers, shared everything, and played sax together on engagements. This boy was strikingly good-looking. He had been voted the most handsome man in college and had already captured the hearts of all the co-eds. His good looks had a masculinity about them that the men admired, and yet he was a very modest and unassum-

ing chap. We were inseparable. It was he who suggested that we transfer from Maine to Yale for financial as well as academic reasons, but after persuading me to transfer he found that he had failed in one course at Maine and could not transfer. I had become so enthused over the idea that I went through with it. At Christmas vacation my sophomore year at Yale, he came down to visit me in New Haven, and I saw to it that he was engaged to play with me at the various engagements we had throughout Connecticut. We went to those élite country clubs and golf clubs where the wealthy manufacturing society of Connecticut gives dances for its youth at vacation time, and at these very places, where I had played always unnoticed, this boy, as he sat playing next to me, created an immediate furore. The very girls who probably never knew that I had been there before, forced their partners to dance in front of him; they knocked his music over purposely; they even asked the leader who he was, and I remember two who asked for an introduction. It only goes to show that if a woman has enough interest, or to say it the other way, if the man is physically attractive enough, she will stop at nothing to meet him. Of course there is this compensation. Very often, as in the case of the woman characterized as "beautiful

but dumb," many a good looking man turns out to be very disappointing in mentality or in personality, despite his attractive appearance. My chum, however, was very fortunate in being extremely intelligent, likable and lovable, and the girls usually liked him all the more after they met him. But there are many men who fail to hold the interest after the introduction has been performed. In my own particular case, I can truthfully say that it has been quite the opposite. My difficulty has been that, not having striking looks, I lacked the gateway and key to meeting the girl, and where a sponsor or an introduction was lacking, I was at a complete loss, because obviously I could not force myself upon a girl. I have been miserable several times in my life, when I have seen unattached girls that I felt, as I saw them talking and dancing with others, would make me very happy if I could know them, but have failed to attract them or even—lacking an introduction—to meet them. I could only watch them from a distance when I might possibly have been able to give them some of the romance that I believe most women want. Still I am happy. Fate was very kind to me, and it would be absolutely ungrateful to be anything but thankful for what I have and am.

The name Sleepy Hall is probably well known throughout the entire United States. I will never

forget my first experience with real adulation which occurred the first time I played with Sleepy Hall. The town orchestra with which I decided to cast my lot while at Yale secured his services exclusively for the same college year, and on every engagement that this orchestra played Sleepy was with us. At Amherst the crowd stopped dancing many times throughout the evening and stood in breathless admiration of his wizardry when he played such difficult compositions as "*Kitten on the Keys*" on the banjo. When I say the crowd, I should really qualify the statement and say rather, most of the boys and a *few* of the girls who were present at the dances. Very rarely do women notice such things as banjo technique in a dance orchestra. I do not mean to infer that women are stupid and unobservant, but I have watched too many dance crowds not to know that women are not interested in the musical excellence of individual men in the orchestra, and generally only those boys who themselves have attempted to play certain instruments, appreciate and admire the faultless precision of some of the players. Such men as Red Nichols, Miff Mole, and Eddie Lang in a dance orchestra do not mean anything to the average crowd although they are the greatest artists on their respective instruments. But boys who have listened to their records and who

themselves have played at the instruments that these men have mastered, boys would rather stand and watch their idols than dance. Such was the situation at Amherst parties, Yale parties, country clubs and golf clubs wherever Sleepy Hall played.

Nearly every college student has attempted the banjo, ukelele or guitar at one time or another, and the wizardry of Sleepy Hall could not help but appeal to them. These boys, in a worshipful voice, pointed out Sleepy as they danced with their girls, and the girls, partly from a desire to see what could intrigue the men so, and partly, I suppose, from an odd desire to affect a critical interest in such things, would stop with the boy and watch Sleepy's long, lean fingers as they jumped over the frets. Then of course, each girl, imbued with this new wisdom, would inquire of the next man who "cut in" if he realized that he was listening to the great Sleepy Hall, thereby spreading Sleepy's fame. At nearly every dance, some time during the evening, Sleepy would get up on a chair and go through a routine of banjo solos while the crowd stood in breathless silence. He deserved this attention because I have never yet heard anyone who could do the things on a banjo that he did. At the University of Maine I had known in a smaller way this same adulation.

I do not desire the spotlight. In fact, at the Uni-

versity of Maine, being the musical college lion embarrassed me tremendously, but there was no avoiding it; at Yale I was rather glad that I was not Sleepy Hall. But anyone who knows of the career of Johnny Mack Brown, one of our newest movie stars, will realize that what he says is only too true. Johnny was the football star and hero of his college, and was welcomed home with a brass band and the keys of the city. When he entered upon an ordinary business career, he missed the spotlight, and is frank enough to admit that he felt lost without the cheers and applause of the crowd. He therefore went to Hollywood and has become one of America's great film stars whom it gave me a great deal of pleasure to meet this summer.

Naturally at times I felt a peculiar sensation as I saw this great admiration everywhere we went with Sleepy. It is hard to be the center of all attraction and then to suddenly be relegated to the background, to become, as it were, one of the designs on the wall paper, some one to be *heard* but not *seen*. Yet I had a feeling that I was not always destined to remain in obscurity, and sure enough, my junior year the boys with whom I went to classes daily began to feel that I should meet and dance with their girls, and, as in the case of Sleepy, brought their girls to me for an introduction, as I sat there playing, and sooner or later I usually had

the pleasure of a dance, as the orchestra leader I played for was a Yale man himself, and knew that it was to his advantage to have one or more boys in his band who were not only eligible to dance with the guests but were asked by the ones for whom they were playing. I was very, very happy in my junior and senior years at Yale, and the breath-taking girls that I had once admired from a distance were now mine to know and to meet. That was how I first met Mary Brian. She had just made her first big picture, "The Little French Girl," and a boy at Yale, who was Betty Bronson's cousin and who had met Mary through Betty, had her down to Yale as his guest. I had not heard of her and wondered why he was so proud and insistent that I dance with the girl he had brought. After I had been playing several hours he introduced me to her. We danced a few steps before I was "cut in" on by someone, but in those few steps, I felt the urge to tell her that she had beautiful eyes, to which I added that she knew it only too well. About an hour later, two girls asked me if that was Mary Brian that I had been dancing with. I was not sure of her name, but I recalled that it was something like that. When they told me that I had been dancing with a picture star, I nearly collapsed, especially since I felt that I had given an impression of "throwing a line" by my compliment.

Mary and I met again this last summer while I was on the Coast, and enjoyed many luncheons and evenings of dancing together. Her acquaintance is one of the sweetest things in my life.

* * * * *

My first vivid realization of just how overwhelmingly an individual may be admired came with Valentino's tour into Connecticut. Rather than fulfill the terms of his Paramount contract, Valentino had decided to go on tour as a dancer and judge of local beauty contests, using the armories in every city of importance. His tour in Connecticut included Bridgeport, Waterbury, and Meriden. Although he had his own orchestra to play his tangoes, his managers engaged another to play for the public dancing which followed his act.

Bolton and Cipriano, the two men with whom I was playing while at Yale, were engaged to play for the dancing in these three cities. I had no idea of Valentino's tremendous popularity, but when we drove up to the armory in Bridgeport, the big crowd that was waiting outside the armory mistook our big car for Valentino's, and it was with difficulty that we succeeded in getting into the armory. After that, every time the door slammed, there was a general mob rush for that door, and I

pitied Valentino if it really was he coming through the door. They spirited him away in some way, and I will never forget the faces of everyone who saw him. There were admiration, worship and an agonized look of interest upon them that I had never seen before; and so it was at all three places, and each time the crowd could be held back only by strong ropes and burly policemen. In each case he received as much worship as any human being could receive. Peculiarly enough, I, too, admired him greatly. The more I watched his calm, gentlemanly behavior, the more I realized that he deserved this great adulation. Before this I had admired his acting, and I now saw that he was so genuinely human and so appealing that any woman was justified in the intense admiration that she might have for him.

* * * * *

Now that I, too, have many friends, I often remember my first impressions of New York City in the summer of 1923, when I, with a bunch of Yale boys, played for Gilda Gray at the Rendezvous in New York City. We all stayed in a group of fraternity houses which were empty during the vacation at Columbia University. We did not play Sunday nights, and I will never forget the extreme loneliness that all of us experienced during that

summer in New York. None of us knew anyone and somehow we failed to meet anyone, and on Sundays we wandered around Riverside Drive just as lonely as the sailors from the ships that happened to be at anchor in the Hudson. That summer made me hate New York; it was a summer of unhappiness that I will never forget.

CHAPTER XXI

ORIGINALITY

WHILE we were in Hollywood making our picture we found it impossible to broadcast back to the East. In the first place it was necessary that we be prepared to work on the picture at any hour, day or night, and secondly the line charges for broadcasting across the continent run into thousands of dollars and the reception in the East at best is never good when transmitted over three thousand miles; but radio fans become very devoted and attached to their radio favorites and many of ours seemed to resent our disappearance from the air even after I had told them we would be away for no longer than eight weeks.

These letters from our very devoted fans who upbraided us for going off the air made me very happy. But the letters I received from those who were confined to sick rooms and who found our music a comfort in their illness, and especially some notes I received from a little blind colony just outside of New York, these made me feel slightly conscience-stricken.

However, something almost laughable had happened in the broadcasting of dance music just be-

fore we left for the Coast which made me feel more at ease when I received these letters. It is a well known fact in theatrical circles that our vaudeville appearances were sensational. Nearly everyone knew, too, *that it was our radio broadcasts* which had brought this popularity and it is a truism that whenever any product, person or group of persons achieve success in a particular way or through a particular method, that those who likewise desire to achieve success are quick to adopt the same methods and ideas.

Our sudden rise was the cue for other small and comparatively unknown broadcasting orchestra leaders *who had been broadcasting for years,* possibly *even before we had gone on the air, to drop their own style* and to study our presentation over the air in the hopes of discovering *just what that something was* which had won over our radio audiences. In fact, several of these leaders were frank enough to write or visit me and ask me to show them just how we broadcast and thereby aid them in achieving success. They were honest enough to admit that they too hoped that their adoption of our style would result in as great a popularity for them.

By July and August just preceding our trip to the Coast, this adoption of our particular style had become a fact according to the thousands of let-

ters which reached me from listeners-in, in which they all asked me if I was aware of this adoption. Many asked me if I was going to do something about it. Some showed me copies of letters, very denunciatory in tone, which they had sent to the radio stations asking them why they permitted such an obvious imitation.

But realizing that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and realizing that there was room enough for all of us, I said nothing, and in fact was pleased at the vogue we had apparently created. Then as these unhappy letters from those who missed us reached me, I felt consoled in the thought that in a way those orchestras back East that had admittedly attempted to present a program over the air in the simple style that had brought us such a wonderful reward, these orchestras helped make our absence less keenly felt.

Therefore, on my return from the Coast I made the following statement:

"And . . . to any particular imitator or imitators who may have, *in their adoption of our style of radio broadcasting,* taken our place during our absence, I want to express my sincere thanks and I hope we will find at the receiving end of our broadcast all our old friends and many new ones." The next day I was accused of all sorts of statements.

But in the first place I was extremely sincere in what I said and made no references to singing or to any particular act of mine but referred to a *particular style of radio broadcast.* I had never claimed to be the originator of the crooning style of singing; people have been crooning songs for years, possibly long before I was born. At least, ten years ago I used to listen with delight to the crooning records of Charles Kaley, Al Bernard, and Marion Harris, and I am very frank to say that I have patterned my style of singing after them. Nor was I the first to play certain fox trots very slowly, as Guy Lombardo and his orchestra were playing numbers in a very slow tempo several years before we organized our group of eight. He was forced to do it by the size of the small cafe in which he played, which made fast dancing impossible. I had never heard his band when we organized, but the first tune we played very slowly was the first tune I sang at the Heigh-Ho, namely "Rain." I had discovered after listening to this song that in order to understand its lyrics that it must be sung very slowly, otherwise the lyrics became unintelligible or jerky. Then I discovered there were many other such fox trots, and although some people found the slow tempo difficult to dance to, I continued to play that type of song that way in order *to properly present the song musically.*

Eddie Davis was probably one of the first to use the two violins in a small dance orchestra. It was usually thought that one was enough, just as in the days before Whiteman, combinations of saxophones, trumpets and trombones were unheard of and the individual instruments then used were considered just right. In fact, the instrumentation of our band was really the result of the enthusiasm of Don Dickerman, who had heard Eddie Davis use two violins and had liked it greatly. I agreed with him heartily, having heard the same orchestra, and realized that that wonderful quality of two violins in a small dance orchestra *is* beautiful.

My use of the megaphone came through absolute necessity as, although my voice is very loud when I speak or shout, yet when I use it musically it is not penetrating or strong, and the megaphone simply *projects the sound in the direction* in which I am singing. What I did was simply to risk the censure of public opinion by using it *on every song*, and singing many songs through it, because I believe that one of the biggest defects in most people who sing songs is that they get the *melody* out but not the *lyrics*. Of course, when I broadcast, I do not use the megaphone, rather do I sing very softly, and this same soft quality is amplified and brought to you over the air. From my mother came a part

of the tonal quality of my voice so peculiar to the Irish, and from my father came that French nasal quality which is so apparent on the "n" and "m" syllables, especially over the air. The blending of these Irish and French vocal tones results in a voice peculiarly adapted to the microphone.

My endeavor was to make every word perfectly intelligible and full of meaning; in the words that express emotion and feeling I put emotion and feeling, that is I tried to make the word live for the moment it was being sung; and in aiding me to do this, the megaphone became associated with me so much so that I am often called "the man who originated singing through the megaphone." This is not correct for I did not originate the idea. However, I did invent a megaphone for my own especial purpose. I had noticed that most megaphones made the words more unintelligible than ever, due to the fact that the flare of the cone was so small that people sitting at the sides of the theatre could not hear the lyrics at all. So I experimented and devised the large megaphone which I now use, which gives strength to the voice and yet makes it possible for everyone, even at the extreme right and left of the theatre, to hear. The manufacturer of my megaphone now tells me that he has received many orders for the size which I have adopted.

But to get back to our particular style of radio

broadcast. That is one thing I feel that we at least *popularized,* whether we *introduced* it or not.

Style, of course, includes tempo, but I am going to leave tempo out of the discussion because after all we are really not noted for our slow tempo though a lot of people may think we are; it was really several other features of our radio broadcasting style that pleased people without their actually being aware of it; just as I imagine a great many people have liked a particular room, or painting, or any number of things without actually knowing why, just so do many people enjoy our programs without actually knowing why, instead of being bored, they find the programs refreshing and comforting. That is where psychology and thought on my part unquestionably come in. When we first went into broadcasting, I spent whole hours on each program, being very careful to present tunes that had a significance of their own. I was very careful, as I said in a previous chapter, that no tunes of similar nature or key should ever follow each other (that is, two Oriental fox trots are never to be found next to each other). Furthermore, by taking the heart of the piece (the chorus)—and by presenting just enough choruses of each tune to leave our audiences wanting more, we made groups of numbers that were bound to please nearly everyone. Society orchestra leaders played choruses one after

another, for years, *but too many choruses of the same tune and without any thought, contrast of type or key*, and unknowingly they have bored not only their listeners and dancers, but *themselves and their men.*

In this particular phase I believe we were the first to play groups of carefully selected choruses in which every chorus was contrasted with the next.

Again, too, our style includes my method of announcing. I was not the first orchestra leader to announce; Lopez and Ernie Golden have been doing it at their pianos for years. Specht and Bernie were permitted this unusual privilege by the broadcasting companies but these were rare cases because the broadcasting companies were loath to permit orchestra leaders to make the announcement, as most of them failed to observe the company regulations. Announcements made while the music goes on were not a new idea of mine either, but possibly the idea of making *all announcements, station, commercial* and *musical,* as I used to do on the Herbert Jewelry Hour, was a bit novel. It was only because the small stations that I began on allowed me carte blanche in everything I did that I was able to carry out my idea of making all announcements against a soft musical background.

My conception of a perfect radio hour is one that should at all times keep the listener up in the clouds

of sentiment and feeling. But when the music stops and a matter-of-fact voice begins in cold speech to name the station, and hour, or discuss a product, the listener is brought back to cold, stark, everyday earth and existence. My intention is that those who listen in on our programs shall, from the time we begin to the time we end, be lulled, as it were, into a feeling of happiness, contentment and enjoyment with no disruptions or interruptions, which I consider matter-of-fact station or commercial announcements *without music* are.

I believe it is this effort of mine that has pleased so many people without their really knowing it, and a little reflection may convince you that I am justified in so believing.

No, even if I could, I would not stop those who have adopted our radio ideas from so obviously doing it. There is room enough for all of us and these imitators will, if they are honest with themselves, admit the mimicry which they hope will bring the same reward to them.

CHAPTER XXII

THE IRONY OF FATE

And now they ask me, "What do you think of this admiration? How does it affect you?" How could it affect me otherwise than to give me a feeling of ironic pleasure. After all, I have a sense of humor, and I am tempted at times to burst into hysterical laughter when I reflect that the city in which I was once the most lonesome person in the world, with the same appearance and musical gifts that I now possess, today finds me the target for both admiration and criticism almost as great as that which Rudolph Valentino received.

Right here I must say that I do not seek the publicity I receive. Rather I almost dislike it. Natural publicity, generally true and sound, I enjoy; stunt, sensational and exaggerated publicity I abhor. I employ one press man, and his specific duty is to keep a keen ear close to earth and to try to kill any unfavorable publicity that might be started by those who would drag me down, because it is a fact, all too true, that the bigger one gets, the more one is panned, reviled and hated. But I have enemies, people I have never met, people who do not know me or my work, but who instinctively

dislike me and who would hurt me if they could. I know only too well that certain individuals who cannot stand seeing one so young and apparently untalented, attain something, will not rest until they see the end. It is sometimes possible to avoid a catastrophe if the warning comes early enough. For that reason this one man tries to present the facts as they are, and to keep me in the minds of people as I would like to be kept. I am not going to attempt to convince anyone that I am this way or that way. The greatest tributes to my ideals are the photographs that I have received from the boys who play with me. They have all found me a stern taskmaster, but one who always works for their interests. I have told them that they will never be discharged, no matter what they do, and they know they are assured of a life job with me. We have a world tour which we can begin at almost any time and which will carry us at least four or five years at a good salary for everyone. I will not allow my picture work or anything to hurt my relations with the boys who play with me.

Their greatest tribute, as I say, is expressed on the photos they have given me, for nearly all of them have ended their inscriptions by calling me the squarest man they have ever known or worked for. I can ask no more than that.

One article said that my main ambition was to

make a million dollars. But it is really much simpler than that . . . after having well provided for my mother and father . . . what would really give me great happiness is to possess a beautiful home in the country, not elaborate but homelike and comfortable. I played for years for very little, and was very happy since I play for the sheer love of playing. The same is true today and is quite apparent to a close observer: My boys and I play because *we enjoy our work.* We receive unheard of prices because we won a following through long and extremely hard work on the air and no one can begrudge us what we labored so hard to achieve.

People tell me that our success is fragile, and that the slightest indiscreet action on my part would mean the end. But I like to feel that the bond between us and our true radio admirers and the thousands of sick or unhappy people to whom we have given solace and enjoyment can not be so easily broken and that the end will come only when we cease to bring romance, sincerity, beauty and comfort through our music.

THE END

City of Westbrook, Maine

Office of the Mayor

November 26, 1929.

I, Eugene I. Cummings, Mayor of the City of Westbrook, Cumberland County in the State of Maine, issue this proclamation, with full authority invested in me, by the populace of Westbrook, having been duly elected its Chief Executive.

That, one of Westbrook's most illustrious sons, Mr. Rudy Vallee, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Vallee, residents of Westbrook for twenty-four years, has brought much favorable comment, popularity and publicity to the City of Westbrook as a direct result of his inimitable artistry. Where ever he has been; in London or in California, Westbrook was the recipient of compliments because of Mr. Vallee's personality and the enthusiasm with which he talked of his home City.

That, on the occasion of the New England premiere of his first great Radio talking, singing picture, "The Vagabond Lover" at the RKO-Keith's theatre, in Portland, Maine, beginning Saturday, November 30th, that, we reciprocate to the extent of according his newest achievement, an unparalleled reception in appreciation of Mr. Vallee's success.

I, therefore proclaim Saturday afternoon, November 30th, between the hours of twelve noon and three o'clock in the afternoon, a municipal holiday so that every citizen of the City of Westbrook will attend, en masse, the celebration being arranged for him by the populace proud of this great personality.

This reception will, we hope, proclaim to the world what Westbrook thinks of him and so that in the future, no matter where he will appear, America will know that Rudy Vallee hails from Westbrook, Maine.

I request and urge every citizen to join. I request and urge every merchant to close his establishment for the period of three hours, as heretofore specified, to permit all employees, shoppers and friends an opportunity to join us all Saturday afternoon, November 30th at 1 o'clock at the RKO-Keith's theatre in Portland, Maine, to see and hear Mr. Rudy Vallee in the Radio picture, "The Vagabond Lover."

Eugene I. Cummings
Mayor, City of Westbrook, Me.

Proclamation by the Mayor of Westbrook announcing a holiday in honor of Rudy Vallée

Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

Music Department

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.

MAR 1 1 1932

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

3 9999 05992 520 4